

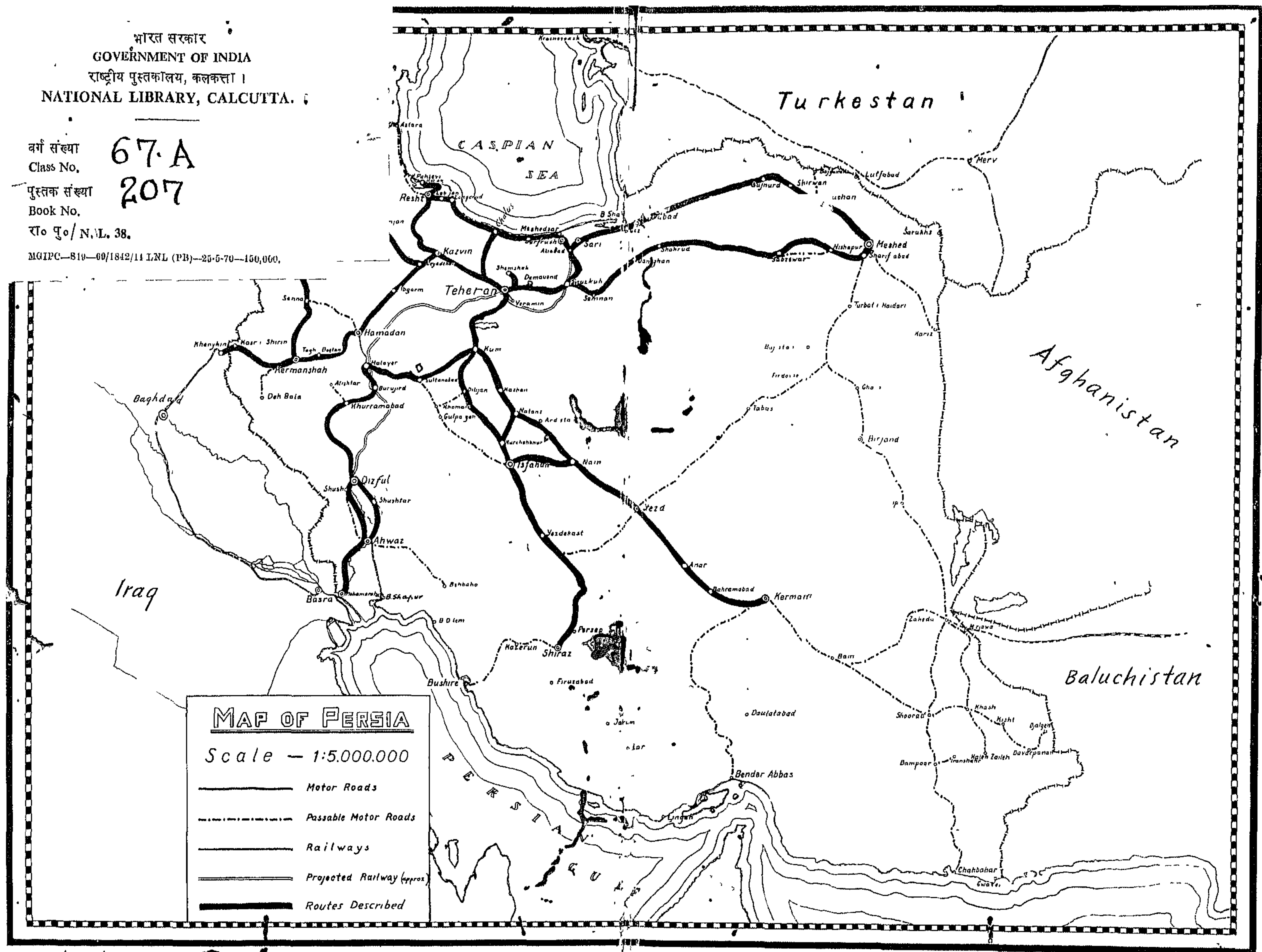
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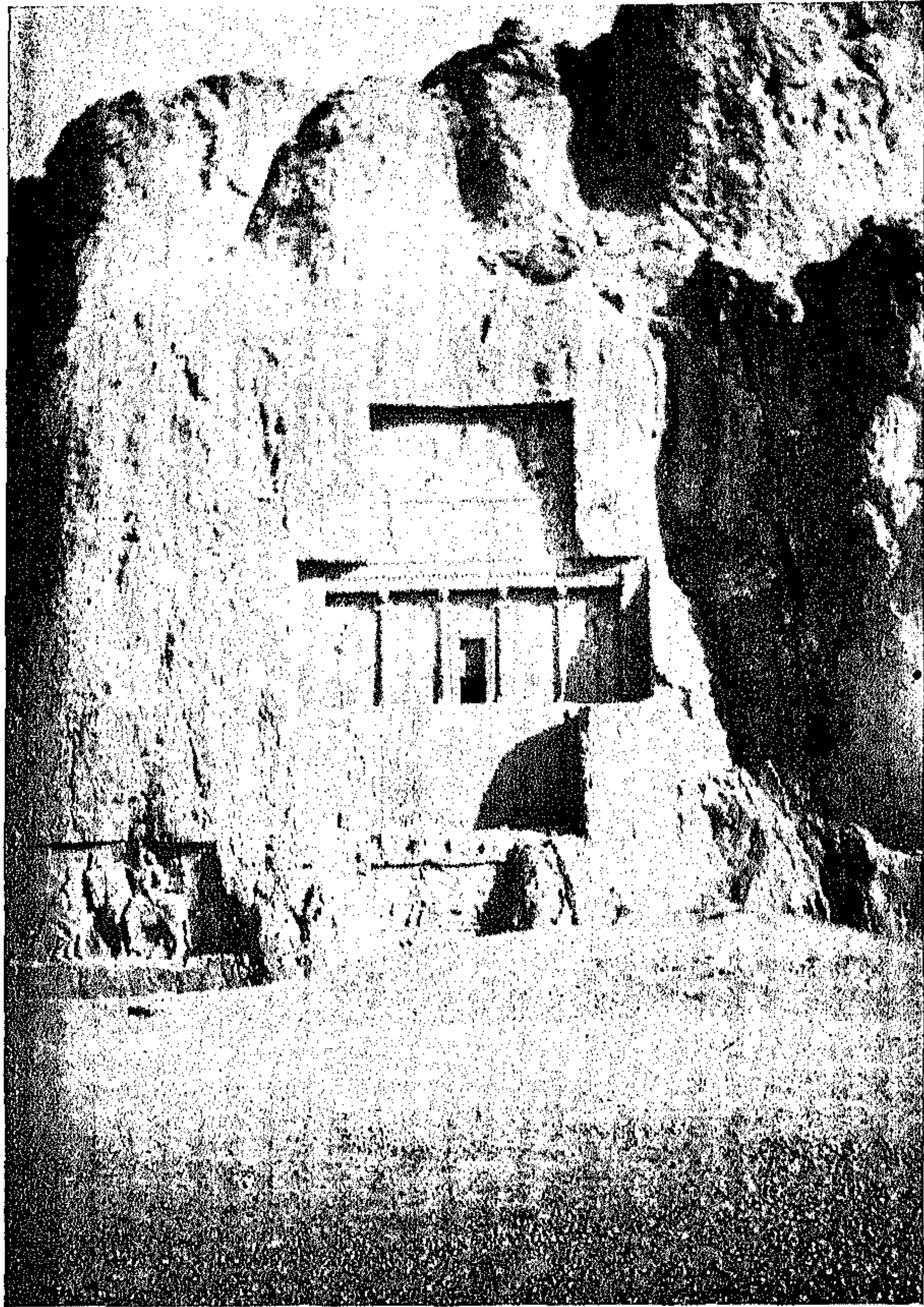
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THE PAGEANT OF PERSIA



Tomb of Darius the Great

To the left is a Sassanian rock sculpture representing the Roman Emperor  
Valerian making obeisance to Shapur

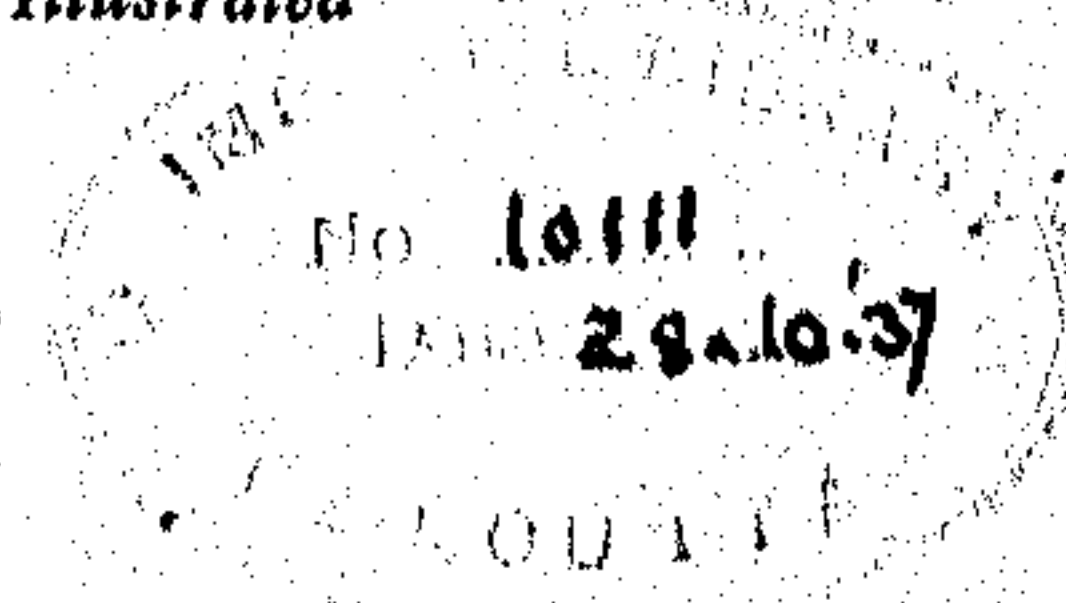


# THE PAGEANT OF PERSIA

A Record of Travel by Motor in Persia  
With an Account of Its Ancient  
and Modern Ways

By HENRY FILMER

*Illustrated*



LONDON

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To  
MY WIFE



*There is no nation which so readily adopts foreign customs as the Persians.*—Herodotus.

*The Persians are the most Civilis'd People of the East.*—Chardin.

*Persia certainly affords the most complete collective picture of the Eastern world.*—Vambery, HIS LIFE AND ADVENTURES.

*History is looked upon otherwise today than it was twenty years ago, and, indeed, it will be otherwise again before many years have passed. We have ceased to view it uniquely as a recital of battles and a chronology of reigns; we shall cease in the same way to hedge antiquity entirely within the contests and accounts of some small Greek States and of two or three Empires such as those of the Seleucids and the Romans. There will be recognized the desirability of forming a judgment of man on the basis of what he has been and on what he has done in all the regions of the earth, and it will be recognized that it is not less interesting to us to study this in Asia than in Athens, when it has come to be well understood that, after all, it is there that have been accomplished the most considerable and fruitful deeds, that it is there that have been produced the greatest ideas, there also that the philosophers of all the ages have gone to find their doctrines as merchants have found there their riches. . . .*

*Everything is in debris, everything in ruins in this Asia. It is with good reason that men occupy themselves there so much with the past and so little with the future. The future is ended for these regions. They think only of living on what has been. But that is still a sufficient perspective since, I repeat it, everything has there taken its source. Nothing of what has been found in the world is to be found elsewhere. It has been thereafter improved, modified, amplified or reduced; this honor of a subordinate kind belongs to us, and it is well that everywhere man should have his allotted task. But it is inventiveness which makes up life; the rest is only secondary. Asia has possessed this inventiveness in the*



highest degree and now rests from this great childbirth.—Gobineau, *TROIS ANS EN ASIE*, 1859.

*Persia . . . has been the track for races moving from the farther parts of Asia through the southern "gateway" into Europe. . . . Persia has succeeded in assimilating the invaders to herself, and passing the newly formed humanity on to the West. It has therefore played a very important part in the history of the peoples inhabiting the southern "gateway." . . . Throughout all the ages, in spite of Mongol, Tartar and Arab invasions and devastations, Nature through the agency of the fertile oases has restored to Iran the damage inflicted on her by man, and has given the Persian that material wealth which has enabled him to build up a culture of undying fame. Every foreign race that has subdued Persia politically has within a short period become culturally assimilated to her. . . . Iran has always been the creator of abstract ideas, philosophies, mysteries and schools of thought, which she has sent forth to the East and to the West. . . .*

*Living in the luxury of the oases, the Persian has lost all desire to fight invaders: he welcomes all, and conquers them by other means than force. The atmosphere of the isolated bazaar-town, with its cool Mosques and dignified Madrasas, calls forth the spirit of compromise in dealing with hungry tribes camped outside the gate. . . . Some tribal chief among the nomads, or some caravan-thief, collects followers and proclaims himself governor of a province. He becomes governor and perhaps Shah, and founds a dynasty. The people of the oases submit, and go on with their fruit-growing and mysticism. The Persian is always being conquered by the sword, but in turn always subdues the conqueror by his intellect.—M. Phillips Price, *WAR AND REVOLUTION IN ASIATIC RUSSIA*, 1918.*

*As for Persia, you will search the East in vain for a people or a Government more doomed to decay. . . .*

*Such a people and such a Government cannot much longer escape the salutary rod of foreign control. It is merely a question*

*as to whether the rulers will be many or single. But in the meantime we must talk about the integrity of Persia. No Under Secretary for Foreign Affairs would be recognisable unless he had the word integrity or the phrase status quo on his lips. But while we talk of integrity we should not be idle. If we have a sphere of influence in Persia we should do well to develop it before some one else steps in to assist us, and personally I should prefer to regard the whole of Persia as our sphere of influence*—Whigham, correspondent in Persia of the MORNING POST, THE PERSIAN PROBLEM, 1903.

*Asia is a very tempting morsel but one which poisons those who feed upon it.*—Gobineau, TROIS ANS EN ASIE.



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## THE PROLOGUE OF THE PAGEANT

### I

IT IS the dawn of history and of the dispersion of the Indo-European peoples. They are breaking their tents in central Asia along the Hindu Kush and the Pamirs, primitive Aryans with their dogs and their herds of domesticated animals. In their trek they will proceed to the farthest confines of Europe. From them the peoples of England, France, Germany, Italy, Spain, Scandinavia, Russia, Greece and others will take their origin. A part will penetrate into India and another portion into Persia. They will build empires and munitions factories, cathedrals and cabarets. Some less simple-minded, the Kurds, Lurs and Bakhtiariis will maintain in Persia their primitive character into the twentieth century.

With them in their dispersion, the Aryans carry the sacred fire which they have worshiped since they became acquainted with its use. It was man's first great step in the mastery of nature. The memory of its aid will be consecrated in one of the world's great religions; its flame will never be extinguished on the great Iranian plateau, the museums of religions.

Iran, where the Medes and Persians and other Aryan tribes settle, becomes the parade ground of history. So long as the political center of gravity of the world remains in Mesopotamia; when that center shifts to Greece and Rome; and, even later, when it passes to western Europe—through all these changes Iran will preserve its character as the scene of many of the world's greatest names and the field of expression of some of man's noblest ideas.

### II

*Of the faith of the waters, the plants, the useful cow, the faith of the wise Lord, who created the cow, and the upright man, the faith of Zoroaster. Thus spake Zarathustra.*



I am Cyrus, the Great King, the King of Kings, the Achæmænian, Lord of the Universe.

*Thus saith Darius the King. I Darius have made a decree; let it be done with speed.*

*Now, O King, establish the decree, and sign the writing, that it be not changed, according to the law of the Medes and Persians, which altereth not.*

*Then King Darius wrote unto all people:*

*I make a decree, that in every dominion of my kingdom men tremble and fear before the God of Daniel: for he is the living God.*

*He delivereth and rescueth, and he worketh signs and wonders in heaven and earth, who hath delivered Daniel from the power of the lion.*

*So this Daniel prospered in the reign of Darius, and in the reign of Cyrus the Persian.*

Now it came to pass in the days of Ahasuerus, or Xerxes, that Esther was sought by him as his queen and her uncle, Mordecai, the Jew, was named by him his vizier.

*Where, O friends, is famous Athens on the broad face of the earth?*

Fate hath decreed it so,  
Peace, peace is not for thee!  
Persia, hear and know,  
War is the lot for thee.

Xerxes, the Hellespont, the bridge of boats, the scourging of the sea, the plains of Marathon. Persians and Greeks at Salamis. The defeat of the Persians.

Xenophon and the Retreat of the Ten Thousand. Thalata! Thalata!

### III

Arbela. Alexander the Great.

*Here (at Persepolis) Alexander made sumptuous feast for the entertainment of his friends in commemoration of his victory. . . .*

*At this feast were entertained women who prostituted their bodies for hire, where the cups went so high, and the reins so let loose to drunkenness and debauchery, that many were both drunk and mad. Among the rest there was at that time a courtesan named Thais, an Athenian, who said Alexander would perform the most glorious act that he ever did, if, while he was feasting with them, he would burn the palace, and so the glory and renown of Persia might be said to be brought to nothing in a moment by the hands of women. . . . The King, stirred up at these words, embraced the motion. . . . Hereupon, multitudes of firebrands were presently got together, and then the . . . King threw the first firebrand into the palace. Thus Diodorus Siculus.*

Then Alexander came to Pasargadæ where, finding broken the tomb of Cyrus, first of world conquerors, he was sore moved when he called to mind the uncertainty of life and the vicissitudes of things.

## IV

Parthians. Mark Antony. Sassanians. Valerian. Chosroes. Shirin. Farhad. Belisarius. Mazdak. Mani.

*Jesus made him stand upright and taste of the Tree of Life. Then Adam looked and wept, he lifted up his voice like a roaring lion, he tore his hair and beat his breast, and said, "Woe, woe, to the creator of my body! Woe to him who has bound my soul to it and to the rebels who have brought me to servitude." Thus spake Mani.*

## V

*In the name of God, the Compassionate, the All-Merciful. There is but one God, Allah, and Mohammed is his Prophet. Kerbela and the Martyrdom of Hussein. Ya Ali; Ya Hassan; Ya Hussein; Ya Allah. Pity Ali; pity Hassan; pity Hussein; O God. May Omar's father be burned, and a thousand curses upon the twain.*

Now the Caliph Haroun-al-Raschid, on whom be peace, was one night exceedingly wakeful, so he called Mansur and said to him as soon as he came, "Fetch me Ja'afar in haste." Accordingly, he went out and returned with the Vizier, to whom said the Caliph, "O Ja'afar, wakefulness hath mastered me this night and forbiddeth sleep from me. . . ." Quoth Ja'afar, "O Commander of the Faithful, wilt thou do that which I counsel thee?" Whereupon quoth the Caliph, "And what is it that thou counsellest?" He replied, "It is that thou take boat with us . . . to a place called Karn al Sirat, so happily we may hear what we have not heard or see what we never saw, for 'tis said: The solace of care is in one of three things; that a man see what he never before saw or hear what he never yet heard or tread on earth he erst hath never trodden." . . . And Shahrizad perceived the dawn of day and ceased her permitted say.

## VI

Sultan Mahmud of Ghazna. Firdausi, the *Shahnameh*, or the Book of Kings. *He who stands under a mighty tree shall be protected from injury by its shade*, so the great epic of Persia of Firdausi.

*O King, I have addressed to thee a homage which shall be the memory which thou wilt leave to the world. The edifices one builds fall to ruin from the effect of rain and the sun's heat; but I, in my poem, have raised an immense edifice that neither rain nor wind can harm.* Thus Firdausi to Sultan Mahmud.

Omar Khayyam, great mathematician by profession, great poet by Fitzgerald.

Oh, come with old Khayyam, and leave the Wise  
To talk; one thing is certain, that Life flies;  
One thing is certain, and the Rest is Lies;  
The Flower that once has blown forever dies.

Loqman, the philosopher, being asked from whom he had learnt wisdom, replied: "From the blind, who do not take a step

before trying the place." To this Sheikh Sa'di of Shiraz added: "First move about, then stir out. Try thy virility first, then marry. Though a cock may be brave in war, he strikes his claws in vain on a brazen falcon. A cat is a lion in catching mice, but a mouse in combat with a tiger."

"It is pleasant to sleep under an acacia on the desert road; but alas! thou must bid farewell to life on the night of departure." Thus Sa'di.

And Hafiz, and the nightingales, and the cypresses, and the rose-gardens of Shiraz. With Shiraz wine turn down an empty glass.

## VII

Seljuks from inner Asia.  
Alp Arslan.

Thou hast seen Alp Arslan's head in pride  
exalted to the sky;  
Come to Merv, and see how lowly in the  
dust that head doth lie.

## VIII

Asia belches again. Genghis Khan and the Mongol hordes from Karakorum. First, towers of skulls, then, towers of brick. Kublai Khan. Marco Polo. Hulagu Khan. Abaga. Arghun. Ghazan the Great. "God has given me the empire of the world," Abaga, the Mongol Il-Khan of Persia, said when refusing to take a man's life; "I must not take away that which I cannot give."

"When two are on a journey," the great Ghazan once asked, "one on foot, the other sitting down, which is more tranquil?" "He who sits," they replied. "And when one is sitting and the other lying down?" "The one who is lying down." "If one is awake and the other asleep, which is the more tranquil?" "The one who sleeps," they said. "Quite true," Ghazan concluded, "and the only real peace is in death."

## IX

Tamerlane, the Earth Shaker. Clavijo and his Embassy thither. Shah Rukh. White Sheep. Black Sheep.

## X

Sefavids: Shah Ismail, the Great Sophy. Anthony Jenkinson. Shah Abbas the Great. Kazvin. The Sherley brothers, Sir Robert and Sir Anthony. Dancing girls. Wrestlers. Polo in the great square of Ispahan. Ambassadors of the Duke of Holstein. *Ci git Rudolph*, watchmaker of Abbas. Olearius, Secretary of the Duke of Holstein's Embassy. Ambassador Brugman and Tullia. Don Juan of Persia, the Shi'a Catholic. *Koruks, kalaats*. Dutch and French and English traders. Father Raphael du Mans. Shah Sefi. Shah Suleiman. Pietro della Valle. Chardin, Tavernier, jewels for the King; Thevenot.

## XI

A government of eunuchs. Shah Hussein. Wine and dancing women and courtezans. Sack of Ispahan by the Afghans, that Ispahan which was half the world. Jonas Hanway, merchant of London. The freebooter, Nadir Shah, conqueror of India, looter of the Peacock Throne, Shah of Persia, done to death. Kerim Khan. The Kajars. Aga Mohammed Khan. *Deliver me their eyes*. Fath Ali Shah. Napoleon's dream of the conquest of India through Persia. British diplomatic missions to Persia: Sir Harford Jones, Sir John Malcolm, James Morier, *Hajji Baba*. *What for you write Hajji Baba, sir? King very angry, sir. I swear him you never write lies; but he say, yes—write. All people very angry with you, sir. That very bad book, sir. All lies, sir.*

Russian penetration into central Asia. The threat to India. Spheres of influence. Babism. Bahaism. The strangling of Persia. The World War. Persian neutrality. Persia overrun. Peace.



Soviet Russia. *To all oppressed peoples of the East, greetings. Renunciation of all concessions. Criminal policy of exploitation. Self-determination of nations.* Thus Lenin.

The Anglo-Persian Agreement. British protectorate. *I, Curzon, Marquis of Kedleston, have spoken. Let it be done with speed.* Thus Curzon.

Coup d'état of February 21, 1921. Soviet-Persian Treaty. Denunciation of Anglo-Persian Agreement.

Colonel Reza Khan.

Commander-in-Chief Reza Khan.

Minister of War Reza Khan.

Prime Minister Reza Khan.

Exit Kajars.

Reza Shah Pahlevi, sometime trooper, colonel, commander-in-chief, minister of war, and prime minister; now Shah-in-Shah, or King of Kings, of Iran.

## XII

The future of Persia.



## THE PAGEANT OF PERSIA



# THE PAGEANT OF PERSIA

## CHAPTER I

### FROM TEHERAN TO MOHAMMERABAD THROUGH LURISTAN AND ELAM

#### *1. The Charm of Persia*

PERSIA? You have heard of it perhaps and some day you may go there as I did with the same vague notions of its geography, its history, its politics and its culture.

If you have not associated it with Zoroaster, with Daniel and Esther and Cyrus and Darius and Xerxes and Haroun-al-Raschid and Hafiz and Omar Khayyam and Bahaism, you have heard at least of its charm.

So you go to Persia, ascending the great mountain plateau from Baghdad in the west or from Pahlevi in the north. You travel for days over a stony barren mountainous country, interspersed only occasionally by towns and villages forming oases on a plateau of from three to ten thousand feet. You encounter wretched villages of sun-dried or mud bricks; you find few hotels which would be classed even as second rate in Europe or America, you suffer from intense cold in winter and from scorching heat in summer; and you are moved to wonder in what the charm of Persia consists. Then, gradually and imperceptibly, in spite of the absence of the ordinary comforts of life, the charm of the country envelops you as subtly and as silently as a London fog.

The sight of the vast barren mountain ranges which rear their heads over every part of the great Persian plateau brings in the end an indefinable peace to the soul. Their lonely presence becomes one of the most readily recognizable elements in the fascination which the country at length exercises over you.

Whence proceeds the peculiar spell of its monotonous succession of naked mountains? May it not be something more than a fanciful view that here like speaks to like and we recognize in the general aspect of the Persian plateau a region comparable in many respects to that once inhabited by our Aryan ancestors? If this be so we find in Persia, accordingly, satisfaction for an age-old nostalgia.

With the charm of its natural scenery there is united a past of exceptional interest and a present of the highest importance in the politics and the future of the Middle East. Persia has contributed to the world more diverse and numerous religions than perhaps any other country. Here Zoroastrianism was developed, containing within itself some of the most important elements of Christianity. Here Mithraism, Manichæism, Mazdakism, Shi'ism, and Baháism, all had their beginnings.

Persia was probably also the original home of some of our most common fruits and flowers, and it is indubitable that to Persia the English language owes such words as rose, jasmine, lilac, narcissus, peach, asparagus, spinach, orange, cypress, musk and myrtle. Other common English words derived from Persian are magic, paradise, peacock, rice, tapestry, tiger, azure, candy, checker, chess, julep, lemon, sugar, caravan and caravanserai.

It was in Persia that the greatest empire of the ancient world had its origin, that of Cyrus the Great (559-528 B. C.). It was here that Daniel and Esther of the Bible lived. It was from Persia that Xerxes started on his long journey having for its object the conquest of Greece.

From the earliest period of historic times the country has been a bridge between the Far East and the Mediterranean world, and today its art represents an amalgam of Eastern and Western influence. Its carpets have been renowned from remote times, as also its rich textiles. Even as long ago as the time of classical Greece the luxury of the Persian Court was proverbial.

Its architecture is represented by the Achæmenian palaces at Persepolis of the sixth and fifth centuries B. C., by the Seljuk and Mongol buildings which lie scattered over its northern extent, and

by the seventeenth-century Sefavid palaces and mosques of Ispahan. In fact, for every period of its notable history there is preserved some striking memorial of interest to the curious traveler.

Strategically, the country has played a notable part in the history of the world for more than two thousand years. Its western borders represented the limits of conquest of even the mighty Roman Empire. Its Mongol sultans were courted in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries by the proudest monarchs of Europe as possible allies against the Saracens, then in possession of the Holy City of Jerusalem. Its Persian rulers, the Sefavids, became the object of the solicitations of the West against the Ottoman Turks in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. In the nineteenth and at the beginning of the twentieth century the country became one of the most important pawns in the struggle between the Russian and British Empires for possession of the Middle East. Although this struggle, with the preoccupation of Soviet Russia in its internal upbuilding, has for the time being ceased to possess the acute character which it once assumed, it is one which may well reappear some day in one form or another.

World literature has received a greater heritage from the Persian poets, Sa'di, Hafiz and Firdausi, than it has from any other Oriental source, while the quatrains of Omar Khayyam have become an imperishable part of English literature. Many of the *Arabian Nights* are the work of Persian story-tellers and one of the most notable of the characters portrayed in those *Nights*, Haroun-al-Raschid, was born and died in Persia. Indeed, Persian cultural influence at the Court of the Caliphate at Baghdad was for many years paramount and all-prevailing.

Today, Persia represents the halfway house between Turkey, which is being rapidly westernized, and Afghanistan, in primitive isolation. In few countries of the world have customs with traditions of thousands of years been perpetuated so unchanged as in Persia; yet few countries today are undergoing so rapid a transformation of their ancient ways. This revolution is under the inspiration of a shah who is one of the most absolute rulers of



the world and yet whose rise has been as spectacular as that of Mustapha Kemal Pasha, of Stalin, or of Mussolini.

The charm of Persia is, therefore, not limited to its physical aspect. It has its source also in the acquaintance gained of a history essential for an appreciation of the cultural past of Western civilization. It is derived not less from the understanding afforded of political forces which bear latent within them the future of an immensely important region of the world, the Middle East. This it is that constitutes the great interest and the charm of the land of the lion and the sun—ancient Persia, modern Iran.

## 2. *The Start by Post Truck*

The initial attraction of Persia will be found less in its present capital, Teheran, of comparatively modern development, than in its more ancient cities and in the astonishingly divergent physical geography of the country ranging from the semi-tropical regions about the Caspian, the barren high mountainous plateau of the central region, to the tropical vegetation of the south.

Teheran, however, whatever the paucity of its attractions as a town, offers a convenient base from which to journey east to Meshed, south to Ispahan and Shiraz, north to the Caspian, southeast to Yezd and Kerman, and southwest to Mohammerah and the Gulf.

To Mohammerah and the Gulf the journey takes the traveler through a part of Persia, Luristan, which is one of the most scenically beautiful and, until yesterday, one of the most inaccessible regions of the country. South of Luristan the way lies through the land of Elam, seat of the oldest civilization of Persia where Nebuchadnezzar, Belshazzar, Cyrus, Darius, Xerxes, Esther, Daniel and Alexander the Great passed in the great pageant of Persian history.

One of the cheapest, although not the most comfortable, means of traveling in Persia is by post trucks which, in the absence generally of railways and airlines, ply regularly between the principal cities. It was on such a truck which leaves Teheran thrice weekly

for Salehabad, more than half the distance to Mohammerah, that a reservation was made by me in the late spring of 1934. Seats for the journey, either alongside the driver or on a bench behind him, for the distance of some four hundred and ninety miles, cost ninety rials, or about five dollars. Second-class tickets, entitling the holder to a seat on the mail or baggage in the rear end of the truck, are obtainable for as little as fifty rials. In addition to the usual items which go to make up the baggage of a traveler, it is well on any journeys in Persia to be equipped with bedding and, if possible, folding cots, for one of the greatest discomforts of travel is the absence, except in the largest towns, of suitable sleeping accommodations.

The mail trucks leave Teheran generally in the evening, and ours for Salehabad was no exception. A Persian official had contrived, by making an early appearance, to obtain the preferred seat alongside the driver. In consequence, my traveling companion and I had to content ourselves with the hard wooden bench behind the driver, together with a young Persian and an elderly woman, his relative, who, like most Persian women, was heavily veiled. Behind us were an indiscriminate lot of Persians of every age, the women huddled together in one corner, making themselves as comfortable as it was possible on the heavy bags of mail and luggage.

In Persia no start is ever definitive and, accordingly, only an hour or two after leaving Teheran at eight in the evening, a halt was made some few miles outside of the city at an arbored roadside tea house for a rest and food. So it has been from ancient times when a first halt was always made but a few miles distant on the start of the longest caravan journey in order that equipment might be overhauled and a reckoning made of anything left behind in the hurry of departure.

Carpets were quickly spread around a circular pool of water on which swans were swimming, tea and food were served and, after dinner, opium pipes were handed by the proprietor to those ordering them. In such tea houses, which are to be found at frequent intervals on every Persian road, the chauffeurs of the

heavy trucks, which have largely replaced the camel and donkey caravans of the past, take their ease and exchange gossip of the road. In a land, moreover, where newspapers are little read outside the principal cities and where illiteracy is widespread, the tea houses serve, as did the coffee houses in England during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, as social centers where news is exchanged and where, over pipes of opium, the world may be viewed in rose colors and the cares and trials of life sloughed off for a little instant.

The postman, who travels with the driver and has charge of the mail, is here best able to play the rôle of the modern Marco Polo. For he has traveled hither and thither to the farthest ends of Persia and within his purview have fallen the sacred shrines at Meshed, rose-petaled Shiraz, Tabriz, Kashan and peerless Ispahan. Reclining on a carpeted bench at any tea house, drawing leisurely puffs from an opium pipe, and surrounded by a gaping throng, he descants upon the adventures of travel and of far-off places and things. It matters not that he has never crossed the borders of Persia, has never viewed any of the great cities of the earth, he has traveled far and wide over the illimitable distances of his country and is as great a subject of awe to the villagers whose worlds are circumscribed by Teheran and Mohammerah and Meshed as if he had traveled the earth over. For to his audience Meshed and Mohammerah, however far distant, are recognizable places, while New York, if it has ever been heard of, is only a shadowy name which means nothing.

It was after an hour and a half that the driver, who had partaken of *chilau kabab*, the common Persian dish, composed of heaps of rice and onions and grilled mutton, stretched himself and announced his intention of resuming the journey. A light rain had meanwhile set in which was to delay our progress, and Kum, a distance of only ninety miles from Teheran, was not reached until three-thirty A. M.

### 3. *Kum to Sultanabad*

Kum is one of the holy cities of the Shi'a faith of Islam, along with Mecca, Kerbela and Meshed. Here many of the sovereigns of Persia are buried and over the remains of Fatima, sister of the eighth Imam, there has been erected one of the most striking mosques in Persia whose gilded dome heralds the approach to Kum from afar. Here Moslem women in particular make their pilgrimage, and, in the confines of the mosque, criminals and other fugitives from justice have been accustomed from time immemorial to seek sanctuary, or, as it is known in Persia, *bast*. Here the immortal Hajji Baba of Ispahan found refuge from the wrath of the Shah. Today none but the most pious of Moslems would care to linger long in Kum which is the personification of dirt and filth. In the late spring of 1934 the stream which passes through the town became unduly swollen from excessive rains and melting snows, and hundreds of the sun-dried clay brick structures which housed the population were dissolved in water. Unfortunately, others like them are rising to take their places, and Kum remains, aside from its resplendent mosque, probably one of the least attractive of Persian towns.

It is of some curious interest that Meshed and Kum, containing the two most sacred shrines in Persia of the Shi'a Moslem religion, the national religion of Persia, should have acquired their holy character as the burial places of two members of the same family. Meshed, the Mecca of Persia, is the burial place of Ali Reza, the eighth Imam; Kum, that of his sister, Fatima. Great mosques have been erected over the respective shrines of Ali Reza at Meshed and of Fatima at Kum and such is the reverence attaching to these sanctuaries that only in the rarest instances have Christians been permitted entry to either except in the disguise of Moslems.

With the establishment of the Shi'a faith as the national religion of Persia under the Sefavids in the sixteenth century and following the transfer of the capital of the country from Tabriz to Kazvin and thence to Ispahan, Ardebil, close by Tabriz, was

abandoned as the burial place of the Sefavid Kings in favor of Kum. For a time Ardebil enjoyed a revered repute as the site of the tomb of Sheikh Sefi, the founder of the Sefavid family, and there the earlier Sefavid monarchs were buried. But, beginning with Shah Sefi I (1629-1642), the remaining Sefavid Kings, Shah Abbas II (1642-1667), Shah Suleiman (1667-1694) and Shah Hussein (1694-1722) were all buried at Kum, as well as two of the Kajars, Fath Ali Shah (1797-1834) and Mohamed Shah (1834-1848). Ravaged by the Afghans in 1722, the city was largely destroyed. The rich tombs of former Persian kings, enclosed in their great sarcophagi of alabaster, marble and ivory and of inlaid ebony and camphor-wood, however, were left undisturbed. The shrine of Fatima was greatly enriched and embellished by Fath Ali Shah at the beginning of the last century when he replaced the tiles of the great dome with plates of gilt copper. Extended descriptions of the city and its tombs have been left by almost all the great seventeenth-century travelers, including Chardin, Tavernier, Herbert and Le Brun and in more recent times by James Fraser.

Our truck found a haven in Kum in the garage adjacent to the post office. After a glance at the earth-covered floors of the caravanserai we chose to stretch ourselves in the hardly less dirty post office, which we preferred on account of the wooden floors. Sleeping, however, was difficult and it was with every satisfaction that we received the decision of the driver to proceed on our way.

The road now led through winding valleys and a rolling countryside of the great Iranian plateau, the valleys becoming more and more verdant as the road wound southwestward. Strings of camels and more often donkeys, the customary beasts of burden in Persia for short distances, were passed. Finally, in the late afternoon, in the midst of mud and slush, Sultanabad, one of the most important centers of the Persian carpet industry, was reached, eighty-five miles from Kum.



4. *Sultanabad to Malayer; Persian Carpets, Protestant Missions and Politics*

At Sultanabad, where a halt was made for food, we made our way to the one hotel in the town with any pretensions. There on the veranda overlooking the square we could survey at the same time the majestic mountains towering over the southern and western sections of the city, which is itself situated at an altitude of more than six thousand feet. The town, built as recently as the early part of the last century and distinguished only for its rug industry, is without historic interest.

No *kabab* was to be had in the hotel; only very bad cutlets swimming in grease; but a bottle of good Persian white wine was available at a price equivalent to some twenty cents. The wine, fortunately, taken in copious draughts, sufficed to make the food in some degree palatable.

We did not visit in Sultanabad the rug "factories" maintained largely by American enterprise where carpets are woven at the demand of American and other foreign buyers. To such an extent has the American preference for certain special designs in Persian rugs made itself felt in Persia that Persian rugs have tended in recent years to lose much of their original character. In other words, American ideas of what Persian rugs should be are being translated into the designs of rugs, with the resultant loss of that indigenous character which distinguished them in former years. Money talks, at least it did in the old "New Era," and American dollars and American interior decorators have almost succeeded in completely ruining the old native Persian designs.

In consequence, there is a great demand in Persia on the part of connoisseurs for the rugs of the pre-American influence. Most of these have long ago been obtained by eager buyers and shipped abroad. Those that remain are in private homes from whence they come occasionally on the market. But the days of great finds in carpets in Persia which once went to make up the museum pieces of public and private collections abroad are gone. Bazaars may be ransacked but the search is becoming more and more dis-

couraging. In the bazaars, whether it be Sultanabad, Hamadan, Meshed, Ispahan or Shiraz, the rugs displayed are almost exclusively modern rugs, the products of the looms of yesterday and today.

It was not long before our obliging chauffeur was blowing his horn outside our rickety forlorn-looking hotel, which we left behind with a sense of relief that the night would not have to be passed there.

We headed west for Malayer, a distance of about sixty miles after which we would turn south and head for the Gulf. The mountain valleys now became more and more ravishing in their greenness, contrasting sharply with the arid aspect of the landscape between Teheran and Kum. The hills were ablaze with many-hued flowers, of which most conspicuous and attractive were the fields of poppies.

Apart from the jungle growths of the region bordering the Caspian and the palm groves along the Gulf in the south, Persia presents no such profusion of vegetation as is found in the countries of Europe and in the greater part of the United States. Rather it is more similar to the most arid regions of Arizona. As a whole, the great Iranian central plateau region is without any but the scantiest supply of water during the long rainless months from May to November. The slender sources which exist are fed by the melting snows of the high mountains or by the underground channels or *kanats* connecting a series of wells for the irrigation of the fields and the supply of water to the villages and towns. It is this deficiency of water and absence during many months of all verdure, except in those oases of greenness where water is perennially available, that has caused Persian poets to descant with such feeling upon the Persian garden and has given it so prominent a part in Persian life. Whether it be in the old miniatures or in the designs of carpets or in the songs of the poets, the garden occupies the center of the Persian's universe.

Malayer, the most westward point on our journey, was reached only a little before midnight when we had all become



concerned for fear the driver would fall asleep and precipitate us in a ditch. Accidents occasioned by lack of sleep on the part of chauffeurs are by no means uncommon in Persia where continuous journeys of thirty and forty hours, broken only by short halts in caravanserais for tea, are the rule rather than the exception. That our driver felt the pressing need of more sleep than he had been able to snatch at Kum on a journey already protracted for twenty-eight hours was evidenced by the announcement of his intention to spend the night at Malayer.

Malayer is the southernmost station of the American Presbyterian Mission in Persia, other stations being situated at Kermanshah and Hamadan in the northwest and at Tabriz, Teheran, Resht and Meshed in the north.

It was at the historic Protestant world missionary congress at Edinburgh shortly after the turn of the century and after the World Powers had divided up Africa and other colonial regions of the world that the decision was reached among the various Protestant Churches of the world to apportion the world missionary fields among themselves, in the manner of world imperialism, to avoid unseemly competition and conflict. The mission bodies had learned through bitter experience of the unfavorable impression made by their competing efforts in foreign lands. The Chinese, for example, were perplexed rather than edified by the competing proselyting efforts of the Dutch Reformed Church of New York and the Mother Church of Holland. Probably the Chinaman, with the sense of humor which a consideration of philosophy gives, would more often than not have chosen to identify himself with the Dutch Reformed Church of New York; but not all converts nor all missionaries, nor all men for that matter, are possessed of that rare gift of a sense of humor or proportion.

The Edinburgh congress took a leaf out of the handbook of imperialism and proceeded to apply the same self-denying principles which the Great Powers were applying in Africa and in China and in Persia and in other "backward" sections of the earth.

The world was divided into spheres of influence and it is interesting to note how closely the partition of the spheres of influence between the mission bodies followed the political spheres of influence of the Powers. The degree of the sense of humor possessed by missionaries in comparison with those of other professions is a question which may be left for debate but there is certainly no denying the keen sense of political realism which mission bodies have displayed. Southern Persia, the traditional sphere of influence of Great Britain, was assigned to the British Church. To Russia, the political heir of north Persia, that region would undoubtedly have been assigned had there existed a Protestant Church in Russia. In any case, its assignment to Great Britain would have been impolitic and its allotment to the political rival of Great Britain and Russia, Germany, would have been no less so. Accordingly, the field of north Persia became the preserve of a neutral power, the United States. And so, throughout the world, application was made of the Biblical injunction of rendering unto God the things that are God's and unto Cæsar, the things that are Cæsar's.

#### 5. *Malayer, the Modern World and the Shah-in-Shah*

Malayer, like many another Persian town, is tucked away at the convergence of mountain ranges in order that the inhabitants may profit to the fullest extent possible from the waters descending the mountainsides. A few years ago the town was a maze of narrow winding streets so indissolubly associated with Eastern towns generally and Persian towns in particular. Now wide streets have been cut through the center of Malayer, converging upon a large public square in the center of which is a patch of greensward, symbolical of the Persian garden. Recently all large towns in Persia have undergone this transformation which gives them, at least at their centers, the appearance of provincial Russian towns. When an inhabitant of Malayer is asked the reason for the broadening of the streets and the setting up of a public square, he will more likely than not offer the answer which was

given us—that the work had been undertaken “under orders of His Majesty.”

This serves to illustrate, better than any comment, that nothing affecting the country as a whole of either any major or minor importance, is done other than at the direct initiative of the Shah. He is the last of the “Little Father” sovereigns of the world; certainly, there is no monarch living in the world today invested with and exercising the power of this “King of Kings, the Shah-in-Shah.” Fifteen years ago he was an unknown officer in the Cossack Brigade of the Persian Army. Today he exercises the power of life and death over his subjects, prescribes their articles of dress, embarks them upon the way of industrialization, orders the transformation of their towns, and by a rigid control of the press supervises the direction of their thinking. Czar Nicholas II of Russia once did likewise. Oh, where are the snows of yesteryear? Now there are Hitler and Mussolini and Mustapha Kemal and the Shah of Persia—all living in obscurity a few years ago.

History teaches—— But what does history teach? The lessons of history in this regard may be left for future interpretation. Why attempt to anticipate the sequel when only the first reel has been run? “The moving finger writes and having writ . . . nor all your piety and wit . . . to cancel half a line . . . nor all your tears wash out a word of it.” Let Omar’s reflections stand. *Quo vadis? Quién sabe? Vsió Ravno. Tout passe. Ma-leesh. Das leben ist wie ein kinderhemd, kurz und beschützen.*

#### 6. *Through Luristan: the Lurs and Other Persian Tribes*

As we plunge deeper into the fastnesses of the mountains in an almost due south direction from Malayer to Borujerd, the wild and hitherto almost inaccessible territory inhabited by the Lurs is entered, extending to the lowlands of the south at Salehabad.

Who the Lurs are ethnologically, or whence they came, is among the anthropological riddles of history. They may represent descendants of the ancient Medes who themselves were descended from the more ancient Scythians who roamed the

southern steppes of Russia in prehistoric times, constituting one of the many waves of nomadic invasions which have immemorially descended upon the Persian land from the east and north.

In little ethnological islands various tribes inhabit the frontier fringes of Persia today: the Kurds in the northwest, Lurs in the west, Arabs, Bakhtiari and Kashgais in the south, Baluchis in the southeast and Turcomans in the northeast.

Many have been the efforts of the rulers of Persia in ancient as in modern times to curb the independence of these tribes and to absorb them in the body politic of Persia. In classical times the Cosseans, as they were known to the Greeks, were already described by Strabo and Arrian as wild and unruly. Hulagu Khan, on his conquest of Persia in the thirteenth century, was especially charged by the Mongol Court to extirpate the Lurs and the Kurds on account of their depredations on the highroads. Tamerlane likewise undertook a special expedition against the former to prevent the plundering by them of caravans en route to Mecca. But in spite of expeditions against them by the Mongols and by the Timurids, Luristan retained a nominal independence under its own atabegs from the eleventh to the sixteenth century. Under Shah Abbas the Great (1587-1629) the title of atabeg was abolished and the chief of the province was known as the vali.

Now even that measure of authority has been removed from the Lur chiefs by the resolute measures taken against them by Reza Shah Pahlevi, founder of the Pahlevi dynasty (1925—). Soon after his ascension to the Peacock Throne this fearless ruler proceeded to strike body blows at the chiefs of the tribes generally, beginning with the Sheikh of Mohammerah, a feudal chieftain, maintaining an *imperium in imperio* in the south. After that Sheikh had been brought to the capital and placed under severe restraint, the chiefs of other tribes were summoned to Teheran where they were either held to insure their good behavior or else, like the Bakhtiari chiefs in 1934, summarily executed or sentenced to long terms of imprisonment.

As one measure of breaking the back of the feudalistic ele-



ments in Persia represented by the tribes, His Majesty the Shah inaugurated, soon after coming to power, a great road-building program. This program was dictated by the desire on the part of the central authorities to obtain greater mobility for the Persian troops in curbing the power of the tribes. It also followed from the necessity, with the advent of the automobile, to adjust the formerly primitive means of communication, adapted to the use of the camel and donkey, to the more modern means as represented by motor transport.

Few foreigners before 1928, when the modern road between Malayer and Salehabad through Luristan was constructed, had ever succeeded in penetrating into Luristan. Those early travelers who did so were more frequently than not murdered, while even since 1928 the present road and its immediate vicinity have witnessed the kidnaping of Major Carroll, an American citizen, the pillaging of the household effects of a former American Minister in 1930, and the kidnaping of American Consuls Streeper, Thiel and Vice-Consul Hickock in 1933.

For the better enforcement of security today, ancient watch towers have been utilized which stand at intervals of two to three kilometers surmounting the crests of hills overlooking the road from Malayer to Salehabad. These are now manned by Persian road guards and are equipped with telephones. Moreover, all travel of whatever kind is halted at sundown at the nearest roadside inn and not permitted to proceed until sunrise. With all these precautions, however, reports drift into Teheran of the occasional holding-up of travelers by the irrepressible Lurs.

As we proceeded through Luristan peopled by its unsubjugated inhabitants and characterized by a scenery no less wild and savage than its people, we were able to observe the application of the government's policy of enforcing a sedentary life upon the tribes, with the burning of the black woolen tents of the Lurs by the Persian soldiery, accompanied by the cries of the distracted Lur women. Characteristic of the primitive mentality of the Lurs and their attitude toward their women was the sight frequently encountered of Lurs mounted upon oxen, the beasts of

burden and of transport of the tribes, while the women trudged along on foot, bearing their children in the folds of their garments, enclosed to form an improvised cradle at the back, and carrying other burdens on their shoulders.

### 7. *Through Borujerd and Picturesque Khoramabad*

Borujerd, ancient capital of Luristan, lies only thirty-five miles from Malayer, a pleasant attractive town with wide level streets, and presents, in the sunshine, a cheerful animated appearance. The bazaars are worth a visit. Here objects of nickel are wrought by hand, and in the winding labyrinths something of the old Persia remains.

In the center of the town we found an excellent restaurant bearing the quaint title of Hotel of Holiness and in the open-air garden in the rear in the sight of snow-clad mountains we ate the best *chilan kabab* I had found in Persia. The rooms of the hotel which open upon the garden appeared clean and, if not furnished in the style of the Ritz or the Plaza, made me regret, in the light of the excellent cuisine of the restaurant, that we were not lingering for a day in Borujerd.

Khoramabad, slightly over one hundred miles south, however, was our destination for the day and we had to be off immediately after lunch if it were to be reached before sundown. Several swollen streams had already been crossed since leaving Kum, but the most difficult one was yet to be traversed.

We were there presently at its banks on either side of which were shouting and gesticulating men and boys waiting to guide automobiles in their passage through the rapidly flowing waters. A truck was standing imprisoned in the mud of the midstream channel with the waters flowing above its running board while helping hands pushed unsuccessfully to dislodge it and to assist it on its way. As a precaution our driver dislocated his fan belt and covered the carburetor of the truck with rags. Whereupon, with one of the natives of the region running before the car to conduct us along the shallowest part of the river, we made our way through safely.

Khoramabad, by all odds one of the most picturesque towns in Persia, separated from the main highway by a very ancient bridge, lies nestling up under a precipitous mountain cliff which towers above it like the great backdrop of a Brobdingnagian theater. In the center of the town, surmounting a large mound, is an ancient citadel resembling some fortress of the Middle Ages in Transylvania or Germany. A little outside the town on the highway leading to Salehabad is a hewn stone bearing an inscription of Darius the Great commemorating the opening of the road by that sovereign in ancient times, upon which there has been superimposed an inscription of Reza Shah Pahlevi, recording the reopening of the improved highway in 1928.

Today Khoramabad is losing something of its ancient character by the construction of modern barracks housing the several regiments of the Persian Army stationed there to impress the Lurs and to undertake such punitive expeditions against them as occasion may make necessary. The town is filled with soldiers of the Shah. The parade ground on the banks of the river rumbles with the incessant tramp of their drilling, while the monuments of the past of man and the monuments of the past of nature reflect alike man's insubstantiality and transitoriness.

The unclean foreigner is seldom seen in Khoramabad; in fact, Curzon believed that the first European travelers who had ever entered Khoramabad were probably the Englishmen, Grant and Fotheringham, who were murdered there in 1810. Curzon was in error, as the French missionary, Father Sanson, has left a record of his visit to Khoramabad in the closing years of the seventeenth century. Foreign visitors, however, to Khoramabad have always been exceedingly rare. From 1810 to the close of the century the only travelers who succeeded in making their way safely through its environs were the eminent British archaeologists, Rawlinson and Layard, and a Russian diplomat, Baron de Bode.

In the bazaars our progress was blocked by a curious mob of men and boys until a way was cleared for us by a gendarme who contrived after much shouting and pushing to restrain the ex-



cessive curiosity of the native population. Less curious were the merchants and artisans in the open booths who, sitting in Oriental fashion with their legs crossed under them, glanced only casually at us and continued at their tasks with supreme unconcern for the strange ways of life represented by the foreigner.

From ancient Khoramabad to the modern hustling town of Salehabad the road is one of the most picturesque in Persia. After leaving the fairly spacious valley in the center of which Khoramabad is situated, the road follows the River Diz. This stream, as it proceeds south, at length is compelled to force its turbulent way through ever narrower and narrower gorges conspiring to obstruct its path. The highway has been built along the outlet followed by nature, sometimes descending close to the banks of the river, and again, where the gorges leave no path open, ascending and proceeding along the sheer sides of the mountain precipices across which a way has been cut.

At one point, forty miles south of Khoramabad, nature has barred even this means of passage and it has been necessary to open a tunnel more than two hundred feet in length for the road to pass through the solid rock of the mountain. Twenty miles beyond is Pol-i-Dokhtar where, in the early period following the Arab Conquest of Persia in the eighth century, an imposing stone bridge and aqueduct, now falling into decay, once provided a passage from one side of the gorge to the other. De Bode considered the bridge to be of Sassanian origin but it is now ascribed to the period of the Arab Conquest.

But in the region traversed between Khoramabad and Pol-i-Dokhtar there are remains of an even older civilization in this fertile if savage valley. These are the artificial mounds, resembling—even as the dress of the Lur women does that of the American Indians—the Indian mounds scattered over the central eastern states of the United States, and like those Indian mounds, representing the burial grounds of the once habited sites of man in the hunting stage of civilization. Until they have been excavated and the scientific results collated with the other remains of man in the Middle East nothing can be said of their

age. It is certain that they antedate the city civilizations of the sixth century B. C. of the Achæmenian dynasty for they represent man in a primitive state of precivilization, without doubt that of the Neolithic and Bronze Ages of Persia. In any case, whatever the absorption of man with modern civilization, none but a dumb brute can traverse this ancient land between Khoramabad and Shushter and Susa, marked by the hands of Darius, where Daniel lived and prophesied, which echoed once to the tramp of Alexander's legions, and where the Medes, our ancient Aryan cousins, roamed, without a feeling of emotion. Today, outside of Thibet, Afghanistan and the more remote parts of China, there is probably no part of the world of such historic associations, which has been less affected by historic changes. Yet now, perhaps within a few years, the world will have witnessed the disappearance, as completely as that of the aboriginal inhabitants of Tasmania, of the Lurs with their ancient tribal ways, who probably represent the survival in the modern world of the Medes and of their more ancient prototype, the pastoral Aryans from the steppes of central Asia.

#### 8. *Salehabad and the Trans-Persian Railway*

A few miles short of the one hundred and fifty which separate Salehabad from Khoramabad the road, after a more or less gradual descent from the altitude of four thousand feet, leaves the mountains and descends to the flat lowlands sweeping from Salehabad to the Persian Gulf.

Salehabad, a town which has suddenly grown up at the temporary northern railhead of the Trans-Persian Railway, resembles in all respects, in the ramshackle character of its hastily built wooden buildings and in its broad unpaved streets, a western American mining town of the nineteenth century. Italians, Germans, Russians, Danes, Swedes and French in their rough working costumes elbow their cousins, the Persian descendants of the Medes, in the streets or play snooker in the poolroom of the fourth-class hotel of the town, which offers the best accommoda-

tions available, or congregate in the stuffy little Russian restaurant at the end of the main street and, between glasses of vodka, join in the chorus of the songs of the Volga and the Caucasus. In a way Salehabad is symbolic of the independence which Persia has achieved since the war under the firm hand of Reza Shah Pahlevi.

Until the war the vast extent of Persia, equivalent to three times the area of France, was unserved by railway lines of any kind with the exception of the insignificant one of some eighty miles extending from the Russian border at Julfa to Tabriz. Many were the proposals made and many the programs considered for the construction of a Trans-Persian Railway, the schemes including the linking of the proposed Berlin-Baghdad Railway at Bagdad with a Persian line extending through Kermanshah, Hamadan and thence south to the Gulf and north to Teheran and the Caspian. Another proposal was the building of a railway line, connecting the Russian Turkestan line, which skirts the northeast boundary of Persia, with the Gulf, bisecting Persia north and south and perhaps connecting with the Indian Railway system across Baluchistan. One and all, however, of these proposals encountered the opposition either of Great Britain, moved by considerations affecting the defense of India, or of Russia, alarmed lest the building of the railway by Great Britain should seal British influence over Persia.

As a result of the rivalry of these Powers in Persia before the war, Persia remained without a railway system. After the war, with the development of motor transport, the need of railways became less pressing. But, and such are the little ironies of history, once the war and the transformation of Imperialist Russia into a Socialist State had contrived to remove the Anglo-Russian yoke from Persian shoulders and Reza Shah Pahlevi had asserted successfully the independence of the country, the dream of a Persian railway system began to take shape in the imagination of the new Shah.

While other and more highly developed countries were seeking means of salvaging parts of their railway systems, rendered obso-

lete by the development of motor transport, Persia, on the contrary, proposed to endow itself with such a system. There were some who viewed the decision as a reflection of the fact that Persia, backward in economic development, could pass no more than man, in one leap, from a semi-feudal state, over the nineteenth-century age of steam, to the twentieth-century power age. There were others who saw in the Persian resolution a symbolic expression of the country's escape from the tutelage of foreign Powers which had been as gall and wormwood to the deeply entrenched Persian pride. Yet others viewed the Shah's insistence upon the realization of a Trans-Persian Railway as the expression of a modern Pharaoh's desire to leave a modern monument behind him. That such considerations were not absent from his designs in respect of the construction of the railway and the industrialization of the country was evidenced in the account given in a Persian newspaper on October 23, 1934, of the Shah's remarks on the occasion of the opening of a sugar refinery when he was quoted as observing that "the outward magnificence and impressiveness of the refinery alone are worth more than the twenty million rials spent for its construction, even in the event it should yield nothing."

Factories and railways, therefore, have become in Persia in the twentieth century the modern counterparts of gigantic pyramids as testimony of the sovereign's imagination and the expression of his all-powerful will. Moreover, railways offer the advantage of fulfilling both the purpose of a monument as well as a means of the unification of the country, the Shah's great preoccupation. And so the railway has come at length to Persia.

Work on the construction of the railway was begun in 1928 when a contract was awarded an American-German consortium for the building of a line from Bandar Shah at the extreme southeastern corner of the Caspian Sea, across the great Elburz range of mountains, to Teheran, and thence via Borujerd, Salehabad and Ahwaz to Bandar Shapur on the Persian Gulf, the Americans undertaking the work in the south and the Germans in the north. Notwithstanding the great technical difficulties incident



to the building of a railway traversing range upon range of mountains rising to a height of ten thousand feet, work progressed rapidly but was suddenly interrupted in 1931 with the cancellation of the contract by the Persian Government. In 1933 the technical direction of the work was entrusted to a Danish-Swedish consortium, Kampsax, which has divided the remainder of the work into lots which are let periodically to competing contractors.

At the present time the railway line in the south has actually been constructed north as far as Salehabad, one hundred and fifty miles from the Gulf, and from the Caspian south to a distance of ninety miles. The northern line, whose construction has encountered almost unique difficulties owing to the great mountain chain cutting off the Persian plateau from the Sea, is expected to reach Teheran in 1937 and to meet the southern section, confronted with almost comparable difficulties in surmounting the southern chain of mountains separating the Persian plateau from the lowlands of the Gulf, about 1940.

We may, if we choose, proceed on our way to Mohammerah by one of the thrice weekly passenger trains now running from Salehabad to Ahwaz, a distance of ninety miles almost due south along which railway stations have been erected at regular intervals of nine miles. There is, however, nothing to interest the traveler but the bare stations standing in all their virgin loneliness in the midst of a vast plain, for the most part uncultivated, but covered generally as far as the eye can reach by a rank growth of high grass. One wonders what may bring revenue to the railway along this vast plain short of the institution of great irrigation works which may enable the land to be brought back to that high degree of cultivation which must have characterized it in the centuries gone by when it was the land of Elam.

#### *9. Susa: Seat of the Elamites and of Daniel and Esther*

Let us turn from a consideration of railways and modern ways, and undertake some examination of the history and the folkways of a region of modern Persia, the southwestern section, which

was once the site of the oldest civilization of the country of which evidence has as yet been unearthed, or for which there are historical records.

Long before Persia was knit into a nation by the conquering and constructive genius of Cyrus the Great in the sixth century B. C., the Kingdom of the Elamites developed in the once rich valley of the Karun River, the one river of any appreciable size in Persia. The development of Elam was probably coterminous with the development of those other great ancient civilizations of Sumer and Egypt which likewise had their origins in fertile valleys, the Euphrates and the Nile. The boundaries of Elam probably followed on the north the approximate route of the present Khanikin-Hamadan highway, on the west the Tigris, on the south the Persian Gulf, and to the east the Bakhtiari Mountains. Roughly, these boundaries include the modern Persian provinces of Arabistan, Luristan, the Pusht-i-Kuh and a part of Fars.

There is reason to believe that the nation which was once Elam was originally inhabited by Negritos, probably Ethiopians who succumbed in the end to a wave of invasion of the Elamites from the north or east between 10,000 and 7,000 B. C. and became assimilated with their conquerors. Elamite blood probably still courses, therefore, in the present population of southwestern Persia, whose deeply swarthy complexion betrays their highly mixed racial origin from the Negro, the Elamite, the Mede, the Arab, and the Persian proper.

As a nation Elam actually emerges in history about 3000 B. C., such of its history as has been revealed recording a constant succession of struggles with the neighboring civilizations of Sumer, Babylonia and Assyria to the west from which it was separated by a conveniently lofty mountain range. About 645 B. C. its capital, Susa (Shushan of the Bible), was captured and sacked at the hands of Assyrians. From that time Elam disappears from history.

But not so its capital, Susa.

Although all that is left today of Susa, once the seat of the

mighty Elamites who devised their own system of writing, an art and a civilization, are only a series of mighty mounds representing the historical debris of centuries, Susa survived Elam for more than ten centuries.

It was here that Daniel lived and drew the inspiration for his great career. Here Darius, the successor of Cyrus the Great, erected his winter capital on the ruins of the Elamite capital. Here the beautiful Jewess, Esther, was chosen from among "the fair virgins" as the queen of Ahasuerus (Xerxes). Thence Xerxes set out in 480 B. C. with his mighty army for the conquest of Greece. To Susa he returned, after his defeat in the great sea engagement at Salamis, in which the brother of Æschylus took part. From him no doubt Æschylus derived the local color for his great tragedy, *The Persians*.

Fate hath decreed it so,  
Peace, peace is not for thee!  
Persia, hear and know,  
War is the lot for thee.  
—ÆSCHYLUS.

More than a century later, in 331 B. C., Susa was captured by Alexander the Great in his triumphal march through Asia when an Achæmenian treasure of fifty millions dollars in bullion fell into his hands. *Fate hath decreed it so*. The city thereafter fell into ruins; *peace, peace is not for thee*; was rebuilt by Shapur II (310-379 A. D.) of the Sassanian dynasty, but its fortifications were again razed on the occasion of the Arab invasion of Persia in the seventh century. It was not until the end of the nineteenth century that French archaeologists, Dieulafoy and De Morgan, uncovered its ancient past on the eve of the Great War when Persian territory was overrun by the armies of Russia, Turkey and Great Britain. *Persia, hear and know, war is the lot for thee*.

Of all the historical characters identified with Susa none are more shadowy in outline, for all the record preserved of them in the Books of Daniel and Esther in the Bible, than Daniel and



Esther of Susa. And yet, in their careers, none better exemplify the strange turns of fortune's wheel in the East than these two, the one who leapt into fame as the King's confidant and adviser, and the other who sprang from a life of obscurity to become the Queen of Susa.

Esther's career is paralleled in the lives of innumerable women of Persia, Afghanistan, Egypt and the older Turkey who have been made royal consorts or concubines solely for their beauty. In the Book of Esther it is written: "Then said the king's servants that ministered unto him, Let there be fair young virgins sought for the king."

In the East, by one of those strange anomalies which characterize Eastern ways, life is distinguished at one and the same time by customs the most autocratic and democratic. Queens are chosen not by reason of their pedigrees but for their dimpled knees; one day they have been slave girls, the next they may be queens of the royal seraglio. Oriental kings are concerned not with the family, so much as with the female, lines. Hence, Esther's sudden rise to fortune was eminently characteristic of a situation as common today in the East as it was two thousand five hundred years ago.

Of Daniel it may be said that he was far greater in normal stature, when placed in his proper setting and in the perspective of Eastern habits and customs, than is evident from a superficial reading of the uninterpreted Biblical text.

Daniel lived under the reigns of Nebuchadnezzar, Belshazzar, Darius and Cyrus. It may be recollected that Nebuchadnezzar was the king who resorted to the eating of grass. One of my earliest recollections is the colored print in a children's illustrated Bible showing Nebuchadnezzar as a half-human, half-beast-like figure crouching on all fours plucking at herbage. In these modern days Nebuchadnezzar would no doubt be represented as eating dirt.

Daniel claimed to have the gift of interpreting dreams. He seems to have had undisputed mastership of the field, both in so far as concerns Nebuchadnezzar and Belshazzar; at least no one ever appears to have questioned Daniel's interpretations. That

he was no pussyfooter, even when it came to reading handwritings on walls was evidenced well enough when he read Belshazzar out in *mene, mene, tekel, upharsin* which being translated meant that Belshazzar had been weighed in the balances and found wanting.

For all the royal favor Daniel found himself at length in a lion's den. It was not the last time that a royal favorite in the East would find himself in a like quandary; the remarkable thing about Daniel was that he succeeded in extricating himself from the difficulty. If he had lived in later times in the East he would have been served a cup of the Sultan's favorite brand of coffee or he would have had a long prison term meted out to him, or have been tortured, if not by being precipitated in a lion's den, then by some more refined method of Oriental cruelty.

There are many modern Daniels still living in the Near East. Once they were called grand viziers; today they sit in the cabinet or hold the posts of grand chamberlain, keeper of the king's privy, purse, minister of the court or chief of police. But they are seldom so bold these days as to endeavor to interpret dreams, and they are rarely, if ever, perspicacious enough to read the handwriting on the wall. They leave the one for fortune-tellers or Freudians; the other they postpone too late until the only handwriting they are ever able to read is that written by one of their predecessors on the wall of a prison cell.

The supreme greatness of Daniel as a successful interpreter of dreams, as a reader of handwritings on walls, and in his ability to emerge successfully from such a trial by ordeal as that of making lions his friends, can hardly be appreciated short of a close acquaintance with the modern East. According to the Bible story it may be seen that Daniel was a 'successful psychoanalyst and animal trainer. He was also a supremely great statesman.

It is a commonplace to refer to the "unchanging East." To single out the East thus for slowness of development seems singularly unjust, all the more that today, after thirty thousand years, Neanderthal man appears to have emerged again in Europe. It would be more correct to say that human nature, as well as inanimate nature, changes but slowly. Failing some change in

human nature we would still be hanging by our tails from trees. Unfortunately, it is true enough that, beneath the superficialities of modern progress, Neanderthal man lurks but little below the surface; it has taken hundreds of thousands of years for man to emerge from brute creation and to learn to walk upright; it may well take some thousands more before he develops into a civilized being. Man's case is by no means hopeless; we only need more objectivity, whether in dealing with the Occident or the Orient.

A little east of Susa is Shushter, one of the oldest and, as has been frequently observed, one of the most dilapidated towns of Persia. It may be reached, either from Salehabad via Dizful, a distance of fifty-five miles, or from Ahwaz, sixty miles. However, the road in either direction is execrable, for the Persian authorities, now that the railway has come to Persia, neglect the upkeep of the road, which parallels the railway, lest traffic be diverted from the latter.

\* After the fall of the Achæmenian dynasty in 331 B. C., Shapur I (241-272 A. D.) of the Sassanian dynasty made Shushter his winter capital, continuing, as the Achæmenian dynasty before him, to maintain a summer capital at Ecbatana (Hamadan) in the mountains. The present town of Shushter, one of the hottest places on earth, where the temperature rises in the summer and maintains itself at one hundred and twenty-nine degrees in the shade, is hardly suitable at such times for habitation. The commonalty of the inhabitants, who find it impossible to escape to the plateau regions of Persia, obtain relief from the terrific heat in underground chambers descending beneath their dwellings to a depth of fifty or sixty feet, having no doubt a high antiquity. Moreover, as a further protection from the heat, the houses, unlike most Persian dwellings, are of two stories, the lower half of stone and the upper half of clay bricks.

The site of the town, after the manner of very ancient habitations, was chosen obviously with an eye to security, being situated on a rocky eminence at the extremity of an island situated between two branches of the Karun River.

Across one of the branches is the so-called Valerian bridge, now

fallen into ruins, which, according to Persian tradition, was built by the Roman Emperor Valerian in A. D. 260 at the command of Shapur I by whom the former was held captive. A great rock sculpture portraying Valerian on bended knee before Shapur is one of the great glories of the monuments recording the many successive ages of Persian history close by Persepolis.

Dizful, situated but a little distance from Shushter, forty miles to be exact, is, as other travelers have observed, in all respects a faithful counterpart of Shushter. Its name signifies the Bridge Fort and it too is distinguished by the remains of a once noble bridge spanning the River Diz, believed to be also of Sassanian origin. Today the River Diz must be traversed by ferry by those passing to or from Salehabad by motor. Of Dizful, it only remains to be added that the town is inhabited, in addition to the Moslem population, by followers of the more ancient faith of Sabæanism which developed in early times in southwest Arabia. Though recognizing the divinity of God and worshiping the heavenly bodies, the adherents of this faith maintain no places of public worship, water playing the predominant rôle in their ritual observances, whether it be in respect of baptism, marriage or prayer.

#### *10. Ahwaz and the Anglo-Persian Oil Company*

From Shushter it is a comparatively short distance to Ahwaz which lies on the left bank of the River Karun at its farthest point of navigability. A few years ago Ahwaz was nothing more than a collection of mud hovels, having fallen from the high estate which it occupied in the Middle Ages when, as the medieval Agines, it was the abode of royalty, the seat of a Nestorian Christian bishopric and a favorite winter resort of the population. The historian Gibbon has a word to say of it in his account of the interview between Harmozan, the local satrap, and the all-conquering Caliph Omar.

Today Ahwaz is regaining something of its old importance, lying as it does at the junction of the Trans-Persian Railway with the navigable river route from the old and important port of



Mohammerah, as well as with the pipe line of the Anglo-Persian Oil Company on its way from the oil fields to the great refinery at Abadan, adjacent to Mohammerah.

There was a time but a little while ago when all of south Persia fell within the British sphere of influence in accordance with the Anglo-Russian Convention of 1907 establishing the respective zones of influence between those two Powers in Persia. In accordance with this Convention north Persia fell within the Russian sphere, south Persia within the British sphere, with a neutral zone running through the center of the country. Actually, the Convention did little more than affirm in a written understanding a state of affairs which had been tacitly recognized for many years.

Since the decline of Portuguese and Dutch influence in the Persian Gulf after the great discoveries in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries in the East by navigators of those countries, and after British control of India had come to be firmly cemented in the eighteenth century, British influence in the Persian Gulf and in south Persia became paramount. At about the same time that the American Colonies were asserting their independence, Bushire became virtually a British port where a British political agent took up his residence with oversight over British interests not alone in south Persia but also in the neighboring Arab principalities. Since that time Great Britain has maintained a regular fleet of gunboats in the Gulf, originally for the protection of the sea route to India from pirates who preyed upon such commerce; but, more recently, to stamp out the slave trade and to maintain peace and order generally in the Gulf. To this day, moreover, British consular officers in south and east Persia are appointed not from the British Consular Service but from the Indian Political Service, thus evidencing the preoccupation of the India Government with south Persia for the better defense of India.

With the development of aviation, however, and the displacement of the importance of Persia as the great land bridge for Great Britain between the Mediterranean and India in favor of an all-empire route from the Mediterranean by way of Egypt, Palestine, Iraq and the eastern coast of Arabia under British

control, Persia has ceased to possess the same importance politically which it once had for Great Britain. The formerly pre-eminent political preoccupation of that country in south Persia has been restricted to a concern for the protection and development of its commercial interests, as principally represented by the Anglo-Persian Oil Company. Today, as stands the United Fruit Company to Central America, so stands the Anglo-Persian Oil Company, or the A. P. O. C., as it is called, to south Persia.

Although the Anglo-Persian Oil Company is now one of the four great oil combines of the world, ranking in influence and in the extent of its operations with the Standard Oil, the Royal Dutch Shell and the Soviet Naphtha Trust, it is of comparatively recent growth and development.

The company owes its birth and development to a concession granted in 1901 by Muzaffar-ed-Din Shah to a New Zealander, Mr. W. K. D'Arcy, and it was only after long and seemingly fruitless efforts to find oil in other parts of Persia that oil was finally struck in important quantities on May 26, 1908, at Mesjid Suleiman, some six miles northeast of Ahwaz.

It is interesting to record that the final discovery of oil in south Persia was due in part to the monumental scientific and archaeological surveys conducted some years previously by Jacques de Morgan under a French subsidy. In following his published indications oil was finally found and in recognition of the indirect aid which he had thus accorded the A. P. O. C. he was handsomely pensioned by the British Company. In 1909 the original concession was taken over by a limited liability corporation, organized for that purpose, the Anglo-Persian Oil Company. In 1914, with a view to assuring the British Empire the petroleum products which were rapidly coming to supplant coal, the vast supplies of which in the British Isles had been in part responsible for the development of British sea power and commercial supremacy, the British Government acquired control of the company. Thus, today, of the four great world oil combines, two are controlled by Great Powers, the Anglo-Persian Oil Company, by the British Government, and the Soviet Naphtha Trust, by the Soviet Gov-

ernment. Curiously enough also, these two maintain undisputed control of the Persian market for oil products.

A pipe line was laid down by the company from the Persian oil fields to Abadan, contiguous to Mohammerah, and there a great refinery was constructed, while the company proceeded to extend its operations throughout the world. This extension of the company's operations outside of Persia was one of the occasions for the creation of dissatisfaction on the part of the Persian Government with the working of the concession since, it was alleged, these operations entailed a diminution of the oil royalties due to the Persian Government. In any case the concession was suddenly canceled by the Persian Government on November 28, 1932, and a new concession on a much more favorable basis to Persia was concluded on April 29, 1933, for a period of sixty years.

Persia now ranks fifth among oil-producing countries of the world, production in 1934 having amounted to 7,537,372 tons, from which the Persian Government received a royalty of 2,159,142 pounds sterling. This may be compared with a royalty of only 134,750 pounds sterling received in 1931, a year previous to the cancellation of the concession when production amounted to 5,750,000 tons. Most of the amount which the government is receiving annually in royalties is being utilized, according to the budgetary accounts of the government, for the purchase of airplanes and other military equipment for the Persian Army, the oil resources of the country thus enabling it the more readily to indulge in the luxury of an extensive military establishment.

#### 11. *Ahwaz to Mohammerah and Abadan*

There was a day not far removed from our own when the great trade entrepôt of Persia was the port of Bushire. Caravans moved ceaselessly from that bustling town on the Gulf north along the principal caravan route to Shiraz, Ispahan and Teheran. Through Bushire many of the great European travelers and ambassadors to the Shah's Court in the nineteenth century passed on their way to or from the Persian capital of Teheran. In those days the sea



voyage to Persia was attended with incomparably less difficulties than the long overland journey through Russia or across the unfrequented deserts of Mesopotamia peopled by lawless tribes of Arabs.

Now, however, that a main highway, adequately protected, has been opened since 1928 between Teheran and Mohammerah through Luristan, and a port on the Gulf has been built at Bandar Shapur, Bushire has lost its century-old importance as the principal port of the country. It is too early as yet to judge the potential importance of Bandar Shapur, lying between Bushire and Mohammerah but, for the time being, Mohammerah has replaced Bushire as the principal Persian port on the Gulf.

Mohammerah lies not on the Persian Gulf proper but some miles north of the Gulf at the point of confluence of the River Karun, Persia's only navigable river, and the Shatt al Arab which represents the mingling of the waters of the Tigris and the Euphrates Rivers. Mohammerah is thus the apex of a land pyramid standing athwart two important bodies of water, its importance being thus derived from its incomparable position, accessible as it is by water to Ahwaz, within the interior of Persia on the Trans-Persian Railway, to Basra, the sole port of Iraq, and to ocean-going steamers from India and the Arabian peninsula.

From Ahwaz, Mohammerah may be reached by land by one of two roads. One, a mere trail, on the right bank of the Karun River, crosses a deserted country peopled if at all by nomad tribes, and enters directly into the town. The other, on the left bank of the Karun, follows the pipe line and pumping stations of the Anglo-Persian Oil Company into Abadan whence access is had to Mohammerah by ferry. The first road, a distance of some ninety miles from Ahwaz, actually cuts at one point across the Iraq boundary and is not to be recommended without a guide. The second route, however, is shorter, being but seventy-seven miles and, although apt to present difficulties in rainy weather, may be followed without hesitancy in fair weather.

Once the mountains have been left behind at Salehabad, the heat from the late spring until the late autumn in the region of the

Gulf may be justly described as intense. At Ahwaz the influence of India is already apparent, and becomes more and more pronounced the farther south and east one proceeds.

We had arrived at Ahwaz from Salehabad on the right bank of the Karun and took a ferry to the opposite bank on which the principal portion of the town is laid out. Many of the ferrymen here wore turbans, and with cries, of which only the word "Sahib" was distinguishable, solicited patronage with all the raucous tumult of the Near East. After disembarking on the opposite shore, we continued on foot through the fetid and dust-laden atmosphere of the town to the nearest hotel and garage where a Chevrolet of the vintage of 1929 was found prepared to set off to Mohammerah with passengers at a cost of no more than one dollar and a half.

Once Ahwaz is left behind the road extends over a flat sandy desert broken occasionally by the green foliage of trees and shrubbery and plants which marks the site of an artesian well sunk alongside an oil-pumping station, or by that which marks the natural water supply of an Arab village. Southwest Persia is peopled largely by Arabs, the region itself being known until recently as Arabistan, representing as it does a continuation of the great Arabian desert.

If the modern town of Mohammerah contains no relics of the past, the site is one which has been habited from a remote period. The region around it is mentioned for the first time during the reign of Sargoukin, founder of the dynasty of the Sargons. The city was known as Dour-Yakim, becoming Alexandria with the conquest of Persia by Alexander the Great when a canal was constructed connecting the Karun River with the Shatt al Arab. Destroyed by a rising of the river it was rebuilt under the name of Antioch and protected by dikes. Subsequently it became known successively as Spasim-Charax, as Kerkha-Misan and Asterabad by the Sassanians, and later as Moharji and Mohammerah by the Arabs. When the possession of it became a matter of dispute between Turkey and Persia a hundred years ago, owing to the shifting of the lower channel of the Karun, it was formally

recognized as Persian territory a little later in the Treaty of Erzerum.

No more attractive introduction to Mohammerah is to be had than that in the dusk from the ferry which conveys the traveler from Ahwaz by motorboat to the city. The Karun is lined on all sides to a considerable depth with date palms and the river itself resembles, in its sluggish chocolate-colored waters, the Nile, even the sailboats being in all respects identical with the feluccas which grace that majestic river. As the bend in the Karun is passed, bungalows make their appearance along the right bank with enchanting gardens extending to the water's edge containing oleanders in all their profusion of gorgeous blooms. Presently the sleek gunboats recently acquired by the Persian Government, representing the nucleus of a Persian Navy, loom into view, anchored in the roadstead, and then the wharves of the town, lined with watercraft of all sizes and descriptions, bearing strange burdens from Bahrein, Koweit, Muscat, Basra, or from India and the East African coast.

No more charmingly intriguing view of the mysterious East, the East of the *Arabian Nights* and of *Chu-Chin-Chow*, is to be had than that of Mohammerah from the River Karun at twilight. Some of this mystery is quickly dispelled by that closer view of the town which is had upon landing, with all the dust and squalor of the Near East conspicuously in view. A closer glimpse of the enchanted gardens discloses them to be only ordinary beds of flowers. The veiled women who pass along the main street parallel to the river, the favorite promenade of the inhabitants, never lift their veils before the giaour, and to spare us from disillusionment it is best that we see no more than we do. Only the strange and discordant cries of the Arab boatmen and the swarthy Ethiopians or the lithe East Indians, and the plaintive music from the cafés, in front of which solemn-faced Persian merchants smoke silently their hubble-bubbles or puff with distracted eyes at their pipes of opium, impart an indefinable glamour to the scene from which even the dirt and dust of the town cannot detract.

But woe to the traveler who must needs spend the night at one

of the hotels or local caravanserais! Then no shred of romantic illusion would avail to render remote or rose-colored the realities of a hard couch or worse, the inevitable vermin. Such a traveler would little reckon then the romantic consideration that Sinbad the Sailor once sailed along the shores of Mohammerah. For him nothing would outweigh the charm, under such circumstances, of any hotel, however plain and unpretentious, in London, Paris or New York.

For those fortunate ones enjoying the favor of the Anglo-Persian Oil Company, the rest houses of that company in Mohammerah and throughout southwestern Persia, maintained for its employees, afford a real haven, with electric fans and showers and all that go to make up the creature comforts of Western man.

Abadan, the principal center of activity of the Anglo-Persian Oil Company in Persia, apart from the oil fields, lies only a few minutes by motor across the Karun. There a town of forty thousand inhabitants has grown up around the great refinery of the A. P. O. C., where but a few years before was only sand.

Abadan, with its long rows of neat bungalows, its asphalted streets, and its general air of activity and of Western hustle and bustle, stands in strange contrast to its neighbor, Mohammerah.

Here is the present and there is the past.

Here is the West and there is the East.

Here are descendants of Picts, Angles and Scots whose ancestors were living in the Stone Age three thousand years ago. There are descendants of the Elamites and of the Medes and of the Persians once representing mighty forces in the known civilized world extending from the Nile to the Karun.

Here is science and there is mysticism.

Here is mechanical power and there is all but spiritual poverty.

Yet Persia stands, alone of all the great Oriental nations of history which once exercised an empire's dominion, still independent, having preserved its national integrity through all the tempestuous movements over its territory of Nineveh and Babylon and Macedon and Greece and Rome, and Arabs, Mongols, Afghans, Russians, Turks and British, imperturbable and steadfast in the

maintenance and perpetuation of an unbroken stream of Persian culture.

Racial maniacs would attribute the perpetuation of the national consciousness to the Aryan in the Persian blood. But where Aryan and Elamite and Semite and Arab and Mongol have been so compounded, the answer may rather be sought in the geographical advantages enjoyed by the Persian people in their isolation upon the great Iranian plateau, the age-old protection afforded the highlander in the conservation of his traditions and folkways over the lowlander.

Blood may be thicker than water but mountains are higher than man.



## CHAPTER II

### PERSEPOLIS, CRADLE OF THE PERSIAN NATION

#### 1. *Pasargadæ, and the Rise of Cyrus the Great*

AS THE road from Teheran to Mohammerah enables the traveler to visit the scene of the Elamite Kingdom at Susa, seat of the oldest identifiable civilization in Persia, so the great main highway bifurcating the country from Teheran in the north to Bushire in the south, affords no less an opportunity for a sight and an examination of Pasargadæ, birthplace of the Persian nation, with its ruins of Cyrus's vanished greatness, and of Persepolis, the seat of his illustrious successors.

- If entering Persia from the Gulf port of Bushire, let us cover the one hundred and seventy miles which separate it from Shiraz as rapidly as the tortuous mountain road will permit. This long day's journey will not soon be forgotten because of the ruggedness and precipitous winding turns of the road. The journey will be continued next day by way of Persepolis, thirty-five miles distant, with only a brief glimpse of its mighty ruins, and on, some fifty-four miles north, to the road guard station of Karshul. Even more conveniently, both Pasargadæ and Persepolis may be reached from Teheran on the main motor road by way of Ispahan in one day and a half.

Whatever the route taken to Karshul the automobile is there left behind and the way made on foot or on the back of a donkey four kilometers west to the quiet Valley of the Polvar at Murghab. Here, 2,485 years ago in 550 B. C., according to Ctesias, Cyrus defeated Astyages, last King of the Medes, and thence entered upon that rise to power which did not end until he had made himself the mightiest conqueror till then recorded in history.



Here at an entrance into Fars, Cyrus, previously only the petty tributary ruler of Anshan or Fars, met the Median King Astyages marching from Ecbatana. In the ensuing victory, Cyrus made himself King of the Persians whom he united in the great Persian Empire whose borders were subsequently extended to Egypt and Greece, embracing all the lands lying between Persia and the Mediterranean.

According to tradition, the women and children of the Persians surveyed the decisive battle from the surrounding hills to which they had been sent for safety. Thenceforth, for many years, Cyrus and his successors never failed to present the women of Pasargadæ with a gold piece upon returning from journeys abroad in token and commemoration of the great battle which had had such decisive consequences.

Today, all that is left of the city and palace, which Cyrus caused to be built on the site, are a terrace or marble platform, known locally as the Throne of Solomon, a four-sided building having the character of a tomb, a pillar bearing the trilingual inscription in Persian, Susian and Assyrian, "I am Cyrus, the King, the Achæmenian," a circular column some thirty-six feet in height, a bas-relief depicting a winged figure, and, finally, the tomb of Cyrus, known to the local inhabitants as the tomb of the mother of Solomon.

Time has dealt severely with these few testimonials which remain of the vanished glory of Cyrus. They lie scattered over several miles of the quiet valley where Persian husbandmen today plant their crops of wheat, or graze their sheep, asses and goats, while meditating, if at all, upon the significance, if any, of the crumbling monuments in their midst.

Of all the memorials which remain of the seat of the mightiest conqueror of the world until Alexander, none is more impressive than the tomb of Cyrus, standing now in lonely isolation in the cultivated fields which surround it. The tomb carries a faint suggestion on a smaller scale of the Pyramid of Meidum in Egypt, which stands some miles south of Cairo along the railway to Luxor, a resemblance which may imply something more

than a mere coincidence, seeing that, according to some accounts, the wife of Cyrus was an Egyptian. On the other hand, Professor Herzfeld sees in the gabled form of the topmost structure an architectural influence derived from the style of dwellings in north Persia, while attributing the terraced steps which serve as a base to Babylon.

On these ascending terraces of great white limestone blocks, consisting of seven successive tiers diminishing in size as the summit is approached, there stands in sharp classic outlines the gabled and roofed mausoleum where once reposed the gold coffin of Cyrus. Something of the greatness of spirit of the man echoes down to us across the gulf of twenty-five centuries in the inscription, now no longer existing, but which Greek writers recorded as having formed part of the memorial:

- O MAN, WHOSOEVER THOU ART, AND FROM WHENCE-  
SOEVER THOU COMEST (FOR THAT THOU WILT COME I  
KNOW) I AM CYRUS, WHO FOUNDED THE EMPIRE OF  
THE PERSIANS. GRUDGE ME NOT THEREFORE THIS LIT-  
TLE EARTH THAT COVERS MY BODY

All memory of Cyrus was lost long ago by the Persians, in the course of their tumultuous history written so large by those other and succeeding world conquerors, Alexander, Omar, Genghis Khan and Tamerlane. It is only within the last few years that scholars have succeeded, on the basis of the accounts left by early Greek travelers and historians, in positively identifying the site of Pasargadæ and of Cyrus's tomb. Something, it is true, of the great historical associations of the site have been conserved, however incorrectly, in the attribution of the tomb of Cyrus by the local inhabitants to Solomon's mother.

In 324 B. C. Alexander, returning through Persia after the great campaign of conquest which had brought Afghanistan, Turkestan and India into subjection, visited the tomb of the only man comparable to him of whom history had previously left a trace. According to the Greek historian, Arrian, "it had been an object of great care to him, when he should take Persia, to come

to the tomb of Cyrus," adding that Alexander "was grieved at the insult inflicted upon the tomb," seeing that it had been broken open and despoiled. According to the same author :

The tomb itself in its lower parts had been wrought of squared stone in the form of a square; and above was a house upon it, of stone, roofed, having a door that led within, so narrow that hardly could one man, and he of no great stature, enter even with much difficulty. In the house was placed a golden coffin, where the body of Cyrus was buried, and a couch beside the coffin.

After a description of the sumptuous garments and objects placed beside the coffin, Arrian observes that "hard by the ascent that led to the tomb, a small house had been made for the Magi, who guarded the tomb of Cyrus, from the time of Cambyses, the son of Cyrus, to now, father handing down the guardianship to son."

Aristobulus, a companion of Alexander, who became the historian of his campaigns in later life, recorded, according to Arrian, that he himself was appointed by Alexander to restore the tomb and to repair the coffin which had been despoiled, and that the Magi, who were guardians of the tomb, were tortured so that they should confess who had been guilty of the outrage to the memory of Cyrus.

Plutarch adds that Alexander slew the man who had done the wrong, observing, moreover, "that these things caused Alexander to be sore moved, when he called to mind the uncertainty of life and the vicissitudes of things."

Certainly, there could have been no more dramatic circumstance attending Alexander's conquest of the East than this visit, and the homage paid by him to his renowned predecessor. Under Alexander's orders, there was undertaken the restoration of the moving appeal of Cyrus from beyond the grave in the form of the inscription which has been cited. Two brief centuries had sufficed to cause the destruction of that inscription and to demonstrate that even so small a plot of earth of all Cyrus's once mighty

dominions had been, in fact, begrudged him in death. Small wonder that Alexander, as he mused upon the career of his only comparable predecessor, was "sore moved when he called to mind the uncertainty of life and the vicissitudes of things."

## 2. *Birth of the Persian Nation*

Who was Cyrus, and by what means did he come, as the member of a line of petty princelings, to found the Persian nation?

Before the dawn of Persian history, perhaps as early as 1600 B. C., or thirty-five hundred years ago, the pastoral Aryans inhabiting the steppes of southern Russia and the great plateau of central Asia, began to press forward southward into Persia, as well as westward in successive waves of emigration. We do not know the occasion for this great churning up of the peoples of that region which was so fateful for our destiny. In any case it did not end until the tribal Aryan peoples had wandered to the farthest reaches of Europe and had broken off into those groups making up the Indo-European races of today, namely, the Greeks, Italians, French, Germans, English, Scandinavians, Russians and related races.

Of the Aryan tribes which entered Persia, the principal ones were the Hyrcanians in the north along the Caspian, the Medes in the northwest, and the tribes which came later to be known as Persians. These last, before proceeding to the south, the region of their final settlement, inhabited for some time the neighborhood of Ardelan in the north and are first mentioned by Selam III by whom they were known as Parsuash. Whence their ethnical name of Parsa which they later gave to the area, Pars or Fars, to which they migrated in south Persia about 700 B. C., according to Herzfeld. These Aryan tribes brought with them from the steppe lands the horse which had been domesticated by them, until that time unknown to the Egyptians and the Babylonians.

At about the time of this last migration of the Persians to the region that is now the modern province of Fars, or Anshan as it was more anciently known, the regions thereabout were involved



in a constant succession of wars with the powerful kingdoms of Assyria and Elam. In 715 B. C. Media in northwest Persia became tributary to Assyria, and in 645 B. C. Elam in southwest Persia, to which the region of Anshan had acknowledged sovereignty, fell in turn under the yoke of Assyria. In 612 B. C., however, there arose an independent Median Empire which succeeded in throwing off the overlordship of Assyria and in bringing the petty kings of Anshan, the embryonic Persian kingdom, under the Median dominion, along with Elam.

The first Persian chief of the region of Anshan was Hakhamanish or Achæmenes, as he was called by the Greeks. Hence the name, Achæmenian dynasty, by which the princes or kings, ascending and descending from Cyrus the Great, have become known to history.

The first of the Achæmenian dynasty, properly so-called, was Theispes, the petty lord of the province of Anshan, who, after the overthrow in 645 B. C. by the Assyrians of the Elamite kingdom in which Anshan was included, came in turn to acknowledge the suzerainty of the Medes after they had asserted in 612 B. C. their independence of Assyria.

From Theispes there descended through Cyrus I, and Cambyses I, Cyrus the Great who revolted against Media about 547 B. C. Ecbatana was thereafter occupied by Cyrus and Media and Anshan united in the Persian nation.

After the victory at Pasargadæ, Cyrus, who had borne previously the title of "King of Anshan," thenceforth styled himself "King of Persia." The name was derived from the appellation, Persis, by which the people of the province of Parsa, the modern Fars or Pais, had been known, and was extended to denote all the peoples making up the kingdom established by Cyrus. The name suffered its first transformation by the Ionian Greeks who wrote the name, Persæ, which came eventually to be written in English, Persia. Darius, the successor of Cyrus's son, Cambyses, refers to himself in the inscription on his tomb as "a Persian, the son of a Persian, an Aryan of Aryan stock."

In modern times Persians have come generally to call their

country, Iran, and themselves, Irani, a word derived from the Airiya, of the Avesta, the sacred book of the Zoroastrian faith which, in its worship of the elements, preserves the old prehistoric nature worship of the pastoral Aryans before their dispersal from their original home in central Asia. The term, Iran, is derived from the ancient Aryana, signifying "the country of the Aryans."

In 1935 the Persian Government officially changed the name, by which Persia has become known generally throughout the world, to the more ancient name of Iran.

Accordingly, in now insisting upon the adoption of the words, Iran and Iranian, Persia is actually reverting to a usage which antedates even Cyrus, the father of Persia. The change, indeed, represents a reversion to the nomenclature of prehistoric times when the Iranians, or the Aryans of the Iranian plateau, were only a little removed from that great general dispersal of the Aryan peoples from the cradle of their early civilization in central Asia. Out of this there developed, under the genius of Cyrus, first King of the Persians, the Persian nation made up of the Aryans of Persis or Pars or Anshan, and of Media, as well as of Hyrcania and of Bactria.

The most formidable opponent of the rise to power of the Persian Empire was Croesus, King of Lydia on the seacoast of the Mediterranean. All the world knows the story, recorded for history by Herodotus (484-c.424 B. C.), of the meeting of Cyrus and Croesus after the victory of the former over the latter and how, as Croesus lay upon the pyre erected for his destruction, he recalled the words to him of Solon, "Count no man happy until he be dead." According to Herodotus:

when this thought struck him he fetched a long breath, and breaking his deep silence, groaned out aloud, thrice uttering the name of Solon. Cyrus caught the sounds, and bade the interpreters inquire of Croesus who it was he called on.

After persistent questioning, Croesus at length made answer that he would give much to see the one of whom he had spoken



converse with every monarch. Upon being pressed for a further explanation :

he told them how, a long time before, Solon, an Athenian, had come and seen all his splendour, and made light of it; and how whatever he had said to him had fallen out exactly as he foreshadowed, although it was nothing that especially concerned him, but applied to all mankind alike, and most to those who seemed themselves happy.

Thereupon Cyrus, hearing from the interpreters what Crœsus had said, relented, and directed that Crœsus be removed from the pyre to safety :

bethinking himself that he too was a man, and that he was a fellow-man, and one who had been as blessed by fortune as *himself . . . and full of the thought that whatever is human is insecure.*

Unhappily, later historians have questioned the authenticity of this movingly dramatic episode, although it accords well with that high sense of humanity reflected in the inscription composed by Cyrus for his tomb.

The insecurity of the fortunes of even so great a monarch as Cyrus was later made manifest in his death in battle against the Scythians on the northern frontier of his dominions, far from the capitals which he had established within the Persian Empire at Susa, Babylon, Ecbatana and Pasagardæ, to the last-named of which his body was eventually conveyed and buried.

The causes lying behind the success of Cyrus in raising, within the space of a few years, a previously obscure and isolated tribe to the mastery of the whole of the Middle East is, as has been observed by scholars, difficult to discern today from the evidence available. Herodotus observed that the Persians were "of all mankind the readiest to adopt foreign customs" and it may well be that this adaptability was an important contributory cause to the remarkable extension of the influence of Persia within so brief a period.

After Cyrus's death in 528 B. C. the Persian Empire passed for a brief term to his son, Cambyses, who extended its dominions by the conquest of Egypt. It remained, however, for Darius I, successor of Cambyses, whose reign extended from 521 to 485 B. C., to complete the imperial organization of his great predecessor and to leave, in the capital which was transferred from Pasargadæ to Persepolis, an enduring memorial of Persian greatness which time's ravages and all life's changes have not altogether obliterated.

### 3. *Persepolis, Seat of Darius and Xerxes*

Persepolis lies some fifty-four miles south of Pasargadæ on the main highway from Ispahan to Shiraz.

Leaving the road guard station at Karshul on the highway, the road enters a great range of mountains through gorges cut by the Polvar River and, after passing the villages of Sa'adatabad and Sivand in their lofty mountain settings, enters suddenly the Plain of Mervdasht. On the left of the plain, adjacent to the road, are a few isolated columns representing all that is left of the once flourishing city of Istakhr, a dependency of Persepolis, while the great terraced platform of Persepolis itself, nestling under the hills at the extreme western side of the Mervdasht Plain, lies only a few kilometers beyond.

Here Darius laid the foundations for one of his several capitals, in addition to the winter capital at Susa and the summer capital at Ecbatana. Here Xerxes, the Ahasuerus of the Bible, who reigned from 485-465 B. C., the seeker, in 480 B. C., of the conquest of Greece, added to the monuments already erected by Darius. Here also their successors wrought and abode until the overthrow of the Achæmenian dynasty by Alexander the Great and the burning of Persepolis in 331 B. C. by the Macedonian conqueror.

The ruins of Persepolis proper consist of a great platform, flanked by walls running along three sides, with the abutting hill as the fourth side, the platform jutting out of the hillside for

nearly a thousand feet and fronting the plain along a length of some fifteen hundred feet at a height of from twenty to fifty feet. Access to the platform is gained by a double series of more than one hundred stone steps, rising so gently and of such a width that ten horsemen may ascend abreast to the top. There upon the terrace were erected the palaces of Darius, Xerxes and Artaxerxes, the hall of Xerxes and the so-called Hall of a Hundred Columns, the site bearing the same relationship to the teeming city of Istakhr, as Charles Breasted has observed, as the palace grounds of Versailles to the city of Paris in the eighteenth century.

Aside from the foundations, a few columns, the curious stonework representations of the human figure and of mythical monsters in the Assyrian style, but little remains of the former glories of the palaces of Darius and Xerxes. Perhaps the most interesting of all the monuments are the pair of great stone sculptured stairways uncovered in 1932 from the debris of centuries by Professor Herzfeld, in the course of his archæological excavations at Persepolis on behalf of the University of Chicago.

Up these stairs moved the envoys and bearers of tribute from the twenty-three nations or tribes depicted in the sculptures, distinguished by their different garb. This difference becomes particularly evident in the headgear in which they are represented, ranging from the peaked conical cap of the Scythians to the stove-pipe ornate headwear of the palace guards and attendants. The distinction evident in the character of the headgear worn by the different tributary peoples represented becomes all the more interesting in the light of the fact that until its abolition in 1935 the *kolah* worn by the Persians was the outstanding feature of dress distinguishing them from other peoples.

Other interesting discoveries by Herzfeld include two gold foundation plates found under the respective corners of the palace of Darius commemorating the erection of the palace and similar in all respects to like plates of silver found at Hamadan in recent years, the site of another Achæmenian capital.

While the ruins of Persepolis cannot, in all truth, be said to

match in grandeur the great ruins of Karnak, Baalbeck or the Acropolis, as some writers have claimed, their impressiveness, however, is hardly less than those more massive and better preserved ruins which remain in Egypt, Syria and Greece. At Persepolis the emotions of the spectator are undoubtedly heightened, not alone by the intimate historical associations implicit in the names of Cyrus, Xerxes and Alexander, but by the superb natural grandeur of the great Plain of Mervdasht, in whose bosom they lie, and over which the great barren mountain ranges maintain their silent contemplation of man's fugitive life and work.

It is only within the last century that scholars have succeeded in positively identifying and in resurrecting Persepolis and its environs from the fabulous associations of legendary Persian history. To Persians, Persepolis was the abode of the legendary Jamshid, being known as Takht-i-Jamshid or Throne of Jamshid, while the rock sculptures across the plain were associated with the hardly less legendary Rustam, as Pasargadæ had found itself identified with Solomon and his mother. The explanation of the ascription of these great stone monuments to legendary heroic figures is not difficult. To the unscientific Persian mind of the past only such redoubtable heroes of antiquity as Solomon and Jamshid and Rustam could have possessed the miraculous powers to enable such structures to be erected.

The English traveler, Herbert, who accompanied the second British Embassy to Persia in 1627, with Sir Dodmore Cotton and Sir Robert Sherley, opined that Daniel might have had some hand in Persepolis, a conjecture not so altogether far removed from possibility, seeing that Daniel served successively under Cyrus and Darius and that the latter founded Persepolis.

The inquisitive Herbert made copies of certain of the inscriptions which he found at Persepolis and upon his return to England vainly endeavored to identify the language by comparison of the characters with the "eight and fifty different alphabets" he found in Purchas which contained, as he observed, "all or more of the various forms of letters that either now or at any time have been in use through the greatest part of the universe." Notwith-



standing all his labors he "could not perceive that these had the least resemblance or coherence with any of them." It remained for the great epigraphic scholars of the nineteenth century to unlock the secrets which the cuneiform inscriptions of the Achæmenians had preserved these thousands of years and, in reading the language, to restore the authentic past of Persepolis.

To the modern traveler hardly less interesting than the monuments themselves are the many travelers who have left their names on the walls of Persepolis. Beginning with the year 1704, there are recorded the names of many who achieved a prominent place in later Persian history. There are Nieubuhr, 1765, and W. Franklin, 1787; Sir John Malcolm, 1800, when on his first diplomatic mission to Persia, and author of a history of Persia; Sir Harford Jones, 1809, another British envoy; James Morier, who came in Jones's suite as secretary and wrote of the immortal *Hajji Baba*; Count Gobineau, 1840, French envoy, who in his great studies succeeded in fathoming the Persian character deeper than any European before or since; and there is G. N. Curzon, 1889, afterward Lord Curzon, author of the monumental *Persia and the Persian Question*, and of the no less important if less successful Anglo-Persian Agreement of 1919. There is also to be found inscribed in bold letters the name of the African explorer, Stanley, and underneath his name, "New York Herald, 1870."

More recently, a foreign diplomat in Teheran went so far as to transport a stonemason from Shiraz to Persepolis in order that the memory of his name might find at Persepolis an assured record. The Greeks could hardly have had a name for this propensity of modern man to leave his name inscribed in public places since neither the name of Alexander nor of any of his soldiers is anywhere to be found among the ruins. But there is Xerxes' name inscribed in resonant proud periods:

I AM XERXES, THE GREAT KING, THE KING OF  
KINGS, THE KING OF COUNTRIES OF MANY RACES,  
THE KING OF THE GREAT UNIVERSE, THE SON OF  
DARIUS, THE KING, THE ACHÆMENIAN.

But where is Xerxes, the Great King, the King of Kings, the King of the Great Universe, where is Xerxes now?

Oh, where are the snows of yesteryear?

The memorial of Alexander's visit to Persepolis took the very concrete form of the burning of the site to which it is said he was inspired, in the course of a drunken orgy by the courtesan, Thais, in retaliation for the firing by the Persians of Greek temples. When it is remembered that much of the building materials used by the Persians for the construction of Persepolis consisted of wooden beams for the roofs and sun-baked bricks for the walls, the wonder is that so much of the monuments has survived.

#### 4. *The Panoply of Persia's Past at Naksh-i-Rustam*

In the solid rock of the mountain range overlooking Persepolis are cut two completed tombs which have been identified as containing the remains of the last Achæmenian rulers, Artaxerxes II (404-359 B. C.) and Artaxerxes III (359-338 B. C.), along with an uncompleted tomb no doubt destined for Darius III (336-331 B. C.), the last of his line, who perished in the conquest of Persia by Alexander.

Of far greater interest than these, however, are the tombs and rock sculptures across the valley at what is known as Naksh-i-Rustam, where the great Darius himself is buried, along with Xerxes and Artaxerxes.

At Naksh-i-Rustam, in fact, is in great part portrayed the splendid pageant of early Persian history, including as the monuments do two fire altars of the ancient Aryan nature worship out of which Zoroastrianism developed, an Elamite rock sculpture, the rock-hewn tombs of four Achæmenian monarchs, a monument believed to represent the tomb of Zoroaster himself, together with rock sculptures of the Sassanian dynasty of the early Christian era.

Naksh-i-Rustam, literally "Pictures of Rustam," the legendary Persian hero with whom the rock sculptures have been commonly associated by the local inhabitants, lies a few miles northeast of



Persepolis at the western extremity of a cliff known as Husein Kuh which bounds the valley of the Polvar on the north and sinks immediately beyond the sculptures into the broad Plain of Merv-dasht.

Retracing the way two or three miles north on the road to Ispahan, one crosses the Valley of the Polvar by a winding trail which leads, after some minutes' slow driving across the rock-strewn river bed, to the opposite side. Turning thence to the left and following the side of the precipitous cliff, one reaches the site of Naksh-i-Rustam after a few minutes more.

Of all the distinctive range of memorials concentrated here the most striking are the four rock tombs cut high in the solid rock of the mountains, the small square-stone tower facing the tombs, and the seven bas-reliefs cut out of the stone cliffs below the tombs. These last present a pageant of that second great epoch in Persian history, the Sassanian, which succeeded the Seleucid and the Parthian periods which followed the Achæmenians.

The tombs, which stand some thirty feet from the ground and present the appearance of gigantic crosses cut in the rock's side, face, with one exception, southeast, looking out across the Polvar Valley. The exception is the first or easternmost tomb, which faces southwest at right angles to the others, having been cut at an inward turn of the cliff.

The first tomb on the right is that of the great monarch Xerxes I, successor of Darius the Great, who caused to be built the bridge of boats across the Hellespont in his campaign for the conquest of Greece. He who in his anger ordered the waves to be lashed at their failure to subside before his commands now lies silent with the dust of "seven thousand yesterdays."

At right angles to the tomb of Xerxes is that of his father, Darius the Great, who proved no more successful than his son in his efforts to subdue Greece. It was at this spot that the father and mother of Darius, having expressed a wish to observe the progress of the work on the tomb which had been, as usual, initiated in the lifetime of the person for whose body it was intended to be the sepulchre, met their death when being drawn to

the top by ropes held by the Magi. The Magi to the number of forty became frightened, according to a Greek historian, by the sudden appearance of serpents on the platform, and let go of the ropes, precipitating the parents of Darius to their death.

Alongside the tomb of Darius are similar tombs which are ascribed to Artaxerxes I (465-425 B. C.), son of Xerxes, and to Darius II (424-404 B. C.), grandson of Artaxerxes. Of the four tombs, however, only that of Darius the Great bears an inscription, a long recital of his accomplishments in old Persian, Susian and Babylonian, in which, among other things, Darius testifies to his faith in the new religion of Zoroaster. That prophet had risen during his reign and, on the basis of the old nature worship of the Aryans, had formulated a creed and ritualistic observances which even had their influence on the later development of Christianity and are still adhered to, to this day, by a few surviving followers in Persia and in India.

The inspiration for the rock tombs, it has been suggested, was drawn from the royal Egyptian rock tombs at Thebes, knowledge of which might reasonably have been brought to Persia after the conquest of Egypt by Darius's predecessor, Cambyses. Diodorus, for example, who wrote, it is true, years later, stated that when Cambyses conquered Egypt he led away with him workmen and architects whom he caused to build works in Persia. Doctor Herzfeld, however, does not accept the influence of Egypt on the architecture of either Persepolis or the tombs of Naksh-i-Rustam. He cites the presence of still older tombs northwest of Persepolis similar in style to the Achæmenian tombs, and concludes that these tombs, one and all, in their porticoes conform with those employed in the Persian dwelling of the time.

But, whatever their origin, it may be noted that whereas Egyptian ritual prescribed the concealment of the body to preserve its individuality—a concealment so successfully accomplished in the case of Tutankhamen that only after some thousands of years was his tomb brought to light—in Persia, on the other hand, no such prescription existed for the disciples of Zoroaster.

The ancient inaccessible rock platforms scattered throughout

Persia, on which the bodies of the Zoroastrian dead were and still are exposed to vultures, may well represent the continuing tradition of the method of interment of the dead first introduced in the time of Darius. In support of this view it is to be remembered that Darius the Great was the first of the Achæmenian monarchs to adhere to the Zoroastrian faith and that his rock sepulchre represents the oldest of the rock tombs of the Achæmenians. The burial place of his predecessor, Cambyses, is unknown (perhaps concealed in conformity with Egyptian practice), while the totally distinctive character of the tomb of Cyrus the Great, at Pasargadæ, from the Achæmenian rock tombs of his successors at Naksh-i-Rustam and at Persepolis, is strikingly apparent. Between the form followed in the construction of the tomb of Cyrus at Pasargadæ and that of Darius there is a world of difference which obviously reflects the great revolutionary change which intervened in the religious faith of the Persians. All the more plausible, accordingly, becomes the conclusion of Professor Herzfeld that the four-sided solitary stone tower opposite the tomb of Darius probably represents the place of interment of none other than that great early founder of a religion, Zoroaster, predecessor of Christ and Mohammed.

Of the high antiquity and the deep religious associations of this site there is, moreover, further mute testimony. At a corner of the smooth-faced rock below the tombs is the figure of a priest or king attired in the distinctive plain, but all-embracing, robe of the Elamites whose empire fell before Assyria in 645 B. C., a century before Cyrus, after a history extending from remote antiquity. By analogy to a similar Elamite relief which was discovered by Professor Herzfeld in the same neighborhood he dates the Elamite relief at Naksh-i-Rustam to about 2300 B. C.

But, as if this were not enough to testify to the incomparable sacred character and antiquity of Naksh-i-Rustam, only a few steps around the corner of the cliff are two stone fire altars of from five to six feet in height similar to those on which, before the advent of Zoroaster, the earliest Persians perpetuated the ancient fire worship of their Aryan forebears in this remote cor-

ner of the world to which their wanderings had brought them from central Asia long before the birth of Cyrus. The altars, having an unmistakably Sassanian character, are attributed to Sassanian architects, although the rite of the worship of fire which they represent carries us back to the prehistory of both the Persian and our own Aryan ancestors.

### *5. The Sassanian Epoch of Persian History*

To these relics of the ancient Aryan fire worship, the memorial of the earliest civilization in Persia, of Elam, and those of the Achæmenians and of Zoroaster, there remains to be recorded the no less important evidence of Persia's second great national dynasty, that of the Sassanian line of kings, who maintained their suzerainty over Persia from 224 A. D. to 641 A. D.

With the conquest of Persia by Alexander the Great and the murder of Darius III in 331 B. C., the great Achæmenian dynasty disappears from history after a rule of but little more than two hundred years. But in that brief period a homogenous Persian spirit had been effected by Cyrus and his successors, a development which, it is interesting to note, proceeded almost contemporaneously with the blossoming of a like cultural and national consciousness at Athens. In the democratic city states of Greece full freedom of expression for the individual resulted in the bringing to bear upon the development of Greek civilization of such a number and variety of great men, until the democratic character of those city states disappeared, as the world has never before or since witnessed. To call the roll of those men, who included Plato, Socrates, Aristotle, Æschylus, Euripides, Pericles, Herodotus, Solon, Aristides, Demosthenes, is like calling the roll of the fathers of our present civilization. And yet they lived within the brief span of some two hundred years.

Yet of the Persian civilization contemporaneous with that of Greece, hardly the name of a Persian is known apart from the rulers. There is Zoroaster, it is true, the founder of a religion, but nothing is known of the architects of Persepolis, the sculptors



of the bas-reliefs either there or at Naksh-i-Rustam, or of the poets or other writers who may have flourished in those times.

The contrast between the conditions governing the development of these two contemporaneous civilizations of Greece and Persia and the products of those two civilizations could scarcely be more disparate. In Greece there is record of the flowering of man's genius in almost every form of human activity; in Persia there is record only of the development of architecture and of sculpture under the autocratic and despotic monarchs common to the East who were only distinguished from traditional Eastern despots by a genius for organization which made them for a time masters of most of the then known world.

It has been suggested that it was this profound difference between democratic Greece and autocratic Persia which ultimately determined the issue of the great struggle between those powers and made it possible for Greece, however inferior in arms and in strength to Persia, to withstand, nevertheless, successfully at Marathon and at Salamis the repeated Persian attempts of Darius and Xerxes to conquer Greece.

In the end Persia itself, once deprived of the sole unifying influence made possible in the person of a strong enlightened monarch, was to yield to conquest at the hands of Alexander the Great in 331 B. C. With the death of Alexander in 323 B. C., and in the absence of the development among the Persians of any leaders who might have inspired the millions crushed under the weight of despotism and autocracy, Persia ceased as a united nation for some five hundred years to play a rôle of importance in history.

The death of Alexander, who left no heir, precipitated a struggle for power among his generals. In the end Persia, in common with most of the Asiatic possessions of Macedonia, fell to Seleucus who established his capital at Seleucia on the Tigris. With the neglect of Persia by the dynasty founded by him, which continued until A. D. 129, various parts of the country fell away from Seleucian influence. One such region, Parthia, in the north, which included the modern provinces of Khorasan and a part of



Asterabad, so far developed in strength, after the assertion of its independence in 248 B. C., as to evolve into an empire which successfully challenged even Seleucia and, after its conquest, established the seat of the Parthian kingdom at Ctesiphon in Babylonia.

Parthia was in frequent conflict with the new power of Rome, which had succeeded in the west to the hegemony exercised by Greece over the Mediterranean. With the growing extension of the rule of Parthia in the East, as the successor of the Seleucids, that part of Persia in the south, centering about Persepolis, which had likewise asserted its independence of the Seleucids, finally came also under subjection to Parthia.

At length, however, after a lapse of five centuries, the Persian national consciousness, which had remained dormant since Darius III, reasserted itself in the person of a certain Ardeshir. A Persian in the service of the Parthian Empire, Ardeshir eloped with the favorite wife of his imperial master and, after gaining possession of southern Persia, defeated the Parthian King Ardawan in battle in 224 A. D. Assuming the title of King of Kings of the Iranians, Ardeshir, who reigned until 241 A. D., reintroduced the old Zoroastrian faith and established the second Persian national dynasty which was able to maintain itself in power for four hundred years or until the Arab conquest in 641 A. D.

It would be an altogether tedious task to enumerate all the rulers of this line. Most noteworthy is the fact that it is from this dynasty, which revived Persian independence and reflected the glory of the Achaemenian dynasty, that Persian history departs from its legendary character in the records which have been preserved by the Persians themselves and henceforth assumes an historical character.

Something of the spirit of the rebirth of the Persian consciousness is no doubt reflected in the seven bas-reliefs already mentioned which constitute the last, in point of time, of the memorials of Persia's past left by man at Naksh-i-Rustam.

The series of bas-reliefs appear in the form of greater than life-size panels of the founder of the Sassanian dynasty, Ardeshir, who is shown in the act of receiving his crown from the god,

Ormuz, or in the representation of his illustrious son, Shapur I. Cut in the face of the cliff below the Achæmenian tombs, by far the most interesting of the great sculptured panels is that commemorating the capture of the Roman Emperor Valerian in 260 A. D. by Shapur I who is shown on horseback receiving the homage, on bended knee, of the Emperor.

Some two miles north of Persepolis on the road to Ispahan is a further series of Sassanian rock sculptures carved in a small natural recess in the base of the cliff only a few yards from the road, but executed on a much less ambitious scale than those of Naksh-i-Rustam. The French traveler Chardin relates that the Prime Minister of Shah Sefi I ordered their defacement in order to discourage the visits to them of Europeans. One is moved to wonder at the reasons which restrained, under such circumstances, the destruction by the same Prime Minister of the monuments of Naksh-i-Rustam and of Persepolis itself, although it is only too true that human agencies, as well as natural elements, have spared neither of these great memorials of man's past.

#### 6. *Persepolis in Final Retrospect*

After its burning by Alexander, Persepolis fades slowly out of human knowledge. On the other hand, with the revival of Persian national consciousness five centuries later under the Sassanian dynasty, Istakhr, its neighbor, enjoyed a notable revival until its sack by Arab invaders in the seventh century. Its decline then set in until it became the abode only of wandering shepherds, with its ruins even less indicative of its once proud past than those of Persepolis.

For all the knowledge which research has revealed of the history of Persepolis, it is noteworthy that no ray of light has been cast on the perplexing enigma of the name by which the site was known to Darius and the Achæmenians generally. The name, Persepolis, was a name given it by the Greeks and actually represents a pun on Persopolis (the city of the Persians), signifying the *destroyed* city of the Persians.

The use to which Persepolis was placed has been established beyond all doubt, namely, as a ceremonial resort of the Achæmenian rulers from the time of Darius, its founder, until its partial destruction by Alexander. Thither at spring the King proceeded from his winter capital at Susa and from thence he journeyed to his summer capital in the mountains at Ecbatana.

Thus the celebration in our times of No-Ruz by the Persians on the occasion of the beginning of the Persian New Year on March twenty-first represents a modern survival of a prehistoric Aryan custom commemorating the birth of spring, which found perpetuation by the Persians, under the inspiration of Zoroaster, in the ceremonial observances at Persepolis. Moreover, it is not unreasonable to conjecture that the most frequently recurring motive in the design of the bas-reliefs depicted on the stairways at Persepolis, that of a rearing bull with a lion whose claws and teeth are fixed in its flank, represents the vernal equinox at No-Ruz, the victory of spring over winter, of life over death.

How long the most ancient Persian customs, many of them going back to the Aryan prehistoric period, have lingered in Persia, is probably best exemplified in the continued celebration of this No-Ruz. From the days of Cyrus to the modern era of Reza Shah Pahlevi it was the custom of the king, when receiving his tributary chiefs in audience on this occasion, to accept and give presents. Until quite recently the present Shah perpetuated this very ancient Persian custom by the distribution of gold coins to those whom he received at No-Ruz. Doctor Wills relates that even as late as 1867 the gold coins were distributed in handfuls from trays carried among the Shah's subjects and the diplomatic corps when these were received in audience on the Persian New Year. In 1932, however, the Shah distributed single gold coins only, but after that year even this modified form of a prehistoric custom was abandoned.

Sir James Frazer in *The Golden Bough* devotes a chapter to the fire festivals of Europe, commonly observed in spring and midsummer, at which time the peasants in many parts have been accustomed from remote time to kindle bonfires and to dance

about or leap over them. Frazer considers that they were purificatory in character. But may it not be that they are related to the similar fires which the Persians throughout their country are in the habit of kindling to this day at No-Ruz and that they are a relic, in Europe, as they are accepted to be in Persia, of the ancient fire worship of our Aryan ancestors?

Today in Persia, in this museum of man's past, where the relics of man's oldest beliefs and customs are preserved in part no less than the monuments of man's work, the reception held by the Shah each March twenty-first and the leaping of Persians on that day over bonfires especially kindled for the purpose are a perpetuation through the ages of similar scenes which took place in the days of Cyrus at Pasargadæ and of Darius and Xerxes at Persepolis. More, they doubtless date back to the life of our own and the Persians' forebears on the great central Asian plateau when as a primitive pastoral people the birth of spring was thus celebrated in feasts and by bonfires, embodying that element so sacred then, as it is today, to the Zoroastrian fire worshipers in Persia.

Curzon in his superb study of the ruins of Persepolis in his monumental work on *Persia and the Persian Question*, has remarked that "nowhere is the translation of history into art and architecture more manifest, and nowhere was it more rapidly effected than in the case of Egypt and Persia."

With the extension of the Persian dominions over Assyria and Egypt and the quickened intercourse between Persia and Greece under Cyrus and his successors, the impress of the artistic influence of those countries may be found clearly marked in the ruins of Persepolis and Pasargadæ and in the rock tombs at Naksh-i-Rustam, as that great authority has noted.

From Assyria, Persia borrowed those grotesque representations of winged man-faced bulls to be seen on the Persepolis terrace from some common source, as Greece, the prototypes of the four-sided halls with columned porticoes to be found at Pasargadæ and at Naksh-i-Rustam; and perhaps from Egypt the inspiration of the royal rock tombs. These details might be elaborated but they



represent the suggestive main lines of the debt of Persia to other civilizations. On the other hand, Herzfeld maintains that the conception of the rock tombs was purely Persian.

In any case, Persia was far from being a slavish copyist. The Persian artist developed to its fullest flower the stairway as an adjunct to the royal palace area, such stairways as stand unrivaled in all subsequent history. Similarly, although the idea of the rock tombs may have been borrowed from Egypt, the tombs as they were constructed in Persia possessed an originality all their own. Moreover, the grotesque element borrowed from Assyrian art was relegated to a secondary place, and the panels depicting the processions of subject nations paying tribute to the Great King, while having their prototypes also in Assyrian bas-reliefs, possess a distinguishing clearness of outline and a beauty of detail which make them unique in their superb execution.

What can be said, in conclusion, of this the noblest series of monuments of Persia's past, centering about Persepolis, which time has left to man?

As we take our departure and proceed southward toward Shiraz on the highway which stretches like an arrow from Persepolis, and cast a glance behind at the ruins which soon recede into insignificant stature, there is inevitably quickened into consciousness alike a sense of man's nobility and power and a tragic sense of man's powerlessness in the face of time, of the uncertainty and the vicissitudes of things which caused the great Alexander to be "sore moved" when standing before the tomb of his predecessor, Cyrus, which inspired Khayyam's observation:

They say the Lion and the Lizard keep  
The Courts where Jamshid gloried and drank deep.

Or again:

The stars are setting and the Caravan  
Starts for the Dawn of Nothing—Oh make haste!



### CHAPTER III

## ROSE-PETALED SHIRAZ AND PEERLESS ISPAHAN

### *1. Persia from the Arab Conquest to the Kajars*

BEFORE passing to the two most interesting towns in Persia, Shiraz and Ispahan, some account, however summary, must needs be given of the period of Persian history from the fall of the Sassanian dynasty in 641 A. D. to the Kajar dynasty (1794-1925) during which those towns reached the apogee of their fame and became in turn capitals of Persia.

The Sassanian line, under which the inherited glories of the Achæmenians were revived after an interval of five hundred years, did not fall before it had made its influence felt, like the Achæmenian dynasty, throughout the Eastern world. And, strangely enough, it was one of the last Sassanian rulers, Khusrow Parviz, or Chosroes II (590-628 A. D.), who brought Persia to the zenith of its glory.

Like a brilliant pyrotechnic display lighting the heavens for a little instant and thereafter disappearing from sight, Chosroes II achieved the capture of Jerusalem in 614 A. D. and of Egypt in 619 A. D. only to have his empire fall soon after his death. It succumbed before the hordes which surged out of Arabia in the seventh century under the banners of the crescent and under the cry of "There is but one God, Allah, and Mohammed is his Prophet."

On the plains of Moab in far-away Transjordan, satraps of Chosroes II erected the great palace of Mishetta, not far south of Amman, which is said to have exceeded in the richness of its ornamentation any Sassanian structure of the time. Rediscovered by the Austrian traveler, Musil, only a few years ago, the most beautiful of its intricately carved stonework was presented by the

Turkish Sultan before the war to the Kaiser Friedrich Wilhelm Museum in Berlin. Not far distant is the so-called hunting lodge of Kasr-el-Amra where three elaborate frescoes depicting Chosroes II, the Byzantine Emperor and the King of Armenia, afford the most striking examples which remain of the artistic achievements of the Sassanians and testify to the far-flung political and cultural influence of the Sassanian Empire.

In 641 A. D., at the battle of Nihavend, the Persian Empire was effectively overthrown by the new power of the Arab nomads arising in the Eastern world under the Caliph Omar. Thereafter Persia was ruled for a brief period by the Omayyad Caliphs from far-away Damascus.

In 750 A. D. a new line of Caliphs asserted their supremacy, the Abbasids, who, in 763 A. D. established the seat of government of the Caliphate at Baghdad whence dominion was maintained over a territory stretching from Turkestan in the east to Spain in the west.

Since the frontiers of Persia proper extended at this time close within the vicinity of Baghdad, and since Persian culture was far in advance of that of the nomadic primitive civilization of the Arabs, Persia came with the years to exercise an increasing influence at Baghdad. Having adopted the Moslem faith, it was called upon to furnish many of the important leaders for the administration of the Caliph's dominions and contributed especially to the cultural advancement of the Arab Empire.

As the temporal strength of the Caliphate declined, semi-independent Persian authorities usurped increasing power on the fringes of the Arab dominions, notably in the northeast and in the south of Persia, where numerous petty dynasties asserted a virtual independence of Baghdad for brief periods, while continuing to acknowledge the nominal suzerainty of the Caliph. It was during this period that northeastern Persia was governed directly from Samarcand and Bokhara in Turkestan by rulers styling themselves sultans, while the province of Fars came under the administration of a separate principality.

Following this period of confused rivalries, there appeared in

1037 A. D. a new force in the Middle East, the Seljuk Turks, a nomad tribe from the northeast from whence so many human waves have been swept westward. Extending their influence by degrees over a territory which was eventually to include Turkestan in the east and the shores of the Bosphorus in the west, a capital was established by them for a time at Ray or Raghes, now only a heap of mounds on the outskirts of the modern city of Teheran, as well as at Nishapur.

The Seljuk Turks were followed two centuries later, 1221 A. D., by the hordes of Genghis Khan, who sacked Ray and who made of almost the whole of Persia a barren wilderness such as to excite the comment of the Venetian traveler, Marco Polo, when traversing the country a few years later on his way from Venice to China. Then, for a time, Persia was ruled by Hulagu Khan, grandson of Genghis, and the former's successors.

Persia had hardly settled down to repair the ravages of the terrible destruction wrought by Genghis Khan, who had left behind him gigantic mounds of human skulls to commemorate his conquests, when the country was overrun in 1369 A. D. by Timur the Lame or Tamerlane. Under Timur and his immediate successors, Persia was ruled by innumerable local dynasties holding their territories in fief from the Timurid capital at Samarcand.

Not until 1502 A. D. did there arise an indigenous power in Persia capable of undertaking the restoration of the glories to which the country had been made heir under the Achæmenian and Sassanian dynasties.

This power was that of the Sefavids, who arose in the northeast and who found their apogee in the person of Shah Abbas the Great, a contemporary of Queen Elizabeth of England.

Throwing off the yoke of the Turkish overlords which had been re-established over the country following the decline of the Mongol power after Tamerlane's death, the Sefavid dynasty fixed its seat of government first at Tabriz and subsequently at Kazvin. Finally, under Shah Abbas, Ispahan was transformed into the capital of the country and given that noble aspect which subse-

quent years of neglect have not altogether succeeded in effacing.

With the sack of Ispahan in 1722 by the Afghans and the overthrow of the Sefavid dynasty, Persia lapsed again into a period of confusion. Constant turmoil ensued incident to the struggle of rival forces for power until the appearance of a remarkable natural leader of men, Nadir Shah. Rising from humble origin, this Eastern luminary whose life resembled in many ways that of Napoleon, in a spectacular and brilliant though brief career, which included the invasion of India and the sack of the fabulous wealth of Delhi, led Persia for a little instant to the summit of fame and power in the Middle East.

Only for one crowded hour, however, for following his assassination in 1747 Persia relapsed into confusion from which it was at length rescued by a soldier of Nadir Shah, Kerim Khan, who consolidated his power at Shiraz and brought the greater part of the country under his strong hand.

With the death of Kerim Khan in 1779 and the rise of three rival claimants for power, there was asserted in the end the authority of the Kajars, chiefs of a tribe who had slowly but surely, through all the kaleidoscopic changes of the eighteenth century, extended their strength and influence. Under Aga Mohammed Khan, a eunuch and demon in human form, the Kajar dynasty was founded in 1794. Until its overthrow in 1925 by a relatively obscure army officer, Reza Khan, who, as Reza Shah Pahlevi, founded the latest of Persian lines, the Kajar dynasty continued to maintain its sway under Fath Ali Shah, Mohammed Shah, Nasr-ed-Din Shah, Muzaffer-ed-Din Shah, Mohammed Ali Shah, and the last of the line, Sultan Ahmed Shah.

The annals of Persia during these last centuries, for all the meteoric brilliance cast by Shah Abbas, Nadir Shah and Kerim Khan, afford terrible testimony of the inhuman cruelty which even men of a professedly high civilization and culture may be brought to practice.

Even so great and enlightened a monarch as Shah Abbas caused his own sons to be blinded and put to death owing to jealousy and fear of their usurpation of power. This, however, was



mild punishment when compared with that meted out to the commonalty. Men had horseshoes driven into the soles of their feet or they were bricked up in walls with their heads left protruding to prolong their agony, striking evidence of an Aryan atavism from which it may be long before our sub-human civilization is freed.

Not to be outdone by his predecessors, Aga Mohammed Shah, the eunuch monarch, caused the eyes of twenty thousand of the rebellious inhabitants of Kerman to be presented to him. The strangling and poisoning of grand viziers and ministers were incidents making up the bed-time stories of the young, facts which it is well to recall when contemplating the beautiful architectural and artistic remains of such cities as Shiraz and Ispahan, wrought out of the blood and tears of the masses of Persian people.

## 2. *Rose-Petaled Shiraz, Home of Sa'di and Hafiz*

Quitting Persepolis, the road to Shiraz traverses the marshy lands of the Mervdasht Plain, leaving to the left a Stone Age village Professor Herzfeld has uncovered which carries the history of the locality back perhaps six thousand years.

The road proceeds in an almost straight line to the village of Zerghum, lying at the base of the rocky chain of bare mountain ranges which interpose themselves in the way before reaching Shiraz. Along the road there are occasionally still to be seen the black woolen tents of the tribespeople inhabiting the province of Fars, the Kashgais.

Winding in and out over the mountain road with no signs of human habitation other than the infrequent tents of nomads, an abandoned caravanserai or a caravan of camels and donkeys, the road eventually reaches the summit of the last ridge before Shiraz and descends toward the town by the famous Teng-i-Allahu Akbar or Pass of God is Most Great.

There in the distance, framed by the slopes of the Pass, is Shiraz with its incomparable Persian gardens distinguished by



innumerable cypress trees imparting to the scene an air of tender melancholy and wistful unreality such as is given by a setting of Hoffman's *Tales* or a description of nature by Poe. Contending with the cypress trees for domination are the flashing domes of the mosques, set out in stately measures on the level plain over which the city is spread, and trim minarets from which the faithful are called five times daily to prayer. A rose-colored tint, a reflection of the strong southern rays of the sun on the sand-colored hills, envelops the city, which has contributed to the praise of Shiraz in Persian song and story. "When Shiraz was a city Cairo was its suburb," so the Persian proverb goes.

At the end of the Pass the city is entered by an arched gateway, built at the beginning of the nineteenth century, to replace a still more ancient one which had fallen into ruins. Here passports are examined and the traveler is warned against taking photographs without special permission from the municipal authorities.

Shiraz, the name of which is derived from *shir*, which may mean in Persian either milk or a lion, being variously interpreted as either an allusion to the richness of its pastures or to the prowess of its inhabitants, dates in its present state only from 694 A. D., or to a period subsequent to the Arab Conquest. Its antiquity, however, must be equally as remote as Persepolis and Istakhr. During the Middle Ages it possessed all the importance of a capital under the princes who ruled over it as tributaries to the Caliphate. With the centralization of power under the Sefavid dynasty the city, while tending to lose something of its political importance, actually underwent an artistic rejuvenation during the reign of Shah Abbas when its governor vied with his sovereign in the adornment of its precincts under the inspiration of a similar beautification of Ispahan, the Sefavid capital.

Following the fall of the Sefavids, there intervened a period from 1750 to 1794 when Shiraz became the capital under Kerim Khan Zand until the advent of the Kajars and the transfer by them of the seat of government to Teheran.

On the left when passing into the town is a striking mausoleum of a Moslem saint, one of the numerous so-called *imamzadehs*, or

saints' tombs, which are to be found everywhere in Persia. In this instance the tomb is distinguished by a somewhat more pretentious character than that possessed by most wayside buildings of this kind, and by two unusually tall cypress trees towering above it like silent sentinels.

In the center of the town is the citadel, a fortified enclosure, of high walls with circular towers, adorned with bricks arranged in the graceful patterns characteristic of Moslem architecture in Persia. Over the door of one of the entrances to the citadel, that faces the main square or *meidan*, is a fantastic work in colored tiles dating from the time of Kerim Khan when the precincts constituted his palace.

From the *meidan* entrance is gained to the justly renowned Shiraz bazaars, an enduring monument, as Curzon has noted, to the public-spirited rule of Kerim Khan. Like most Eastern bazaars, those in Shiraz consist of covered avenues, arched at the top with bricks, one avenue of some five hundred yards meeting a somewhat shorter one at right angles to form a rotunda at the point of intersection.

There are the usual products of Persian handiwork and Western factories to be found in the many stalls which line the passageways of the bazaars: Persian carpets and silks and *kalamkars* and brass and silverwork, alongside Soviet matches and Belgian sugar and Czechoslovakian glassware. Perhaps the most distinctive article, however, in the bazaars is a leather water bottle which may be rested on the ground by means of three gaily colored sticks to which it is attached. There can be small doubt that this style of water container goes back far into the past to the age before glassware was known. It may even antedate, for that matter, the even more ancient pottery of Neolithic times and may take us back to the remote Paleolithic ages when hides and skins and a few indistinctive stone and wooden instruments made up the entire personal inventory of man.

Of the mosques at Shiraz which, in common with those of Ispahan, may now happily be visited by the infidel upon application to the local police authorities, there are two worthy of a visit.

The oldest, Mesjid-i-Jameh, built in 875 A. D., is now in a state of almost utter decay, only the entrance and one of the inner courts preserving something of the magnificence and intrinsic beauty which once distinguished it. But time's fell hand has fallen heavily upon the site, while sparing, however, the small stone building in the center of the main inner court which purports to be a copy of the Kaaba at Mecca. Better preserved is the so-called New Mosque, of hardly less antiquity than the Mesjid-i-Jameh, however, which is said to have been converted into a mosque in 1226 A. D. after having served previously as a palace.

But, as Curzon has remarked, with his unfailing skill in laying his finger upon the outstanding features of the Persian scene, it is not in the buildings of Shiraz that its attraction and interest are to be sought but, more especially, in its superb gardens and in the tombs of those two of the four most illustrious poets of Persia, namely, Sa'di and Hafiz.

The tomb of Sa'di, the elder of the two, lies in a cypress-tenanted garden a mile from the town to the northeast. Born in Shiraz about 1193 A. D. and educated at Baghdad, Sheikh Sa'di became one of the great travelers of his time, visiting India, Chinese Turkestan, Asia Minor, Abyssinia and Palestine, making the pilgrimage to Mecca no less than thirteen times and being once a prisoner of the Crusaders. His release from the forced labor incident to his captivity at Tripoli in Syria was only effected by the contraction of a marriage with the daughter of a rich man. Like most such marriages carrying gold fetters, Sa'di's was most unhappy, his wife proving a shrew. On one occasion she is represented as having remarked to him, "Are you not the man my father bought from the Feringhis for ten dinars?" "It is true," Sa'di replied, "he ransomed me for ten dinars and then sold me into slavery to you." In the end Sa'di resumed his travels, leaving his wife behind him.

Out of the richness of a fertile imagination, stimulated by varied experiences, Sa'di returned to his native town where, in the midday and afternoon of his life, he composed *The Gulistan*, or Rose Garden, *The Bustan*, and other works. These have brought

him not alone an enduring fame among his fellow countrymen but have earned for him a no less deserved recognition by critically minded students and lovers of literature throughout the world. Among others, Sir Richard Francis Burton, the great British orientalist, translator of *The Arabian Nights*, has given the English-speaking world a translation of *The Gulistan* while the work has made its way also into most of the languages of the earth. Sa'di was the author, in addition to the works named, of many poems, including a collection of particularly obscene verses for which he offered the quaint excuse in their extenuation that princes must be kept amused. There were no Pullman smoking cars in those days, or newspapers or publishers, poets having to supply perforce the monarch's smoking-room stories.

In Sa'di there is something of the philosophic spirit of a Montaigne and the quizzical biting humor of a Voltaire, best illustrated in some of the sayings of *The Gulistan* tales:

A cat is a lion in catching mice, but a mouse in combat with a tiger.

If thou canst not bear the pain of the sting, put not thy finger in the hole of a scorpion.

Who brings the faults of another to thee and enumerates them will undoubtedly carry thy faults to others.

Sa'di's anecdotes have no less a universal appeal than his sayings. One of his most inimitable stories is that of the man with inflamed eyes who sought treatment of a horse doctor and, as a consequence, lost the use of his eyes following the application of an ointment which the veterinary surgeon employed on animals. The man applied for redress to the courts where the judge, after hearing the evidence, held that no wrong had been inflicted since the man would not have gone to a veterinarian unless he had been an ass.

The manifoldness of the genius of Sa'di is reflected also in the tales of his own personal adventures, recounted by him in verse. There is all the sustained interest of a modern tale of mystery in his account of the predicament in which he found himself at one



time in India when he discovered the means by which the Hindu priests of a certain temple manipulated the movements of an idol to impose upon the credulity of the ignorant worshipers.

The story of Sa'di's adventure and of how he was compelled to kill the priest whom he discovered perpetrating the imposture is recounted in verses translated by Professor E. G. Browne:

The door of the temple I fastened one night,  
Then ran like a scorpion to left and to right;  
Next the platform above and below to explore  
I began, till a gold brodered curtain I saw,  
And behind it a priest of the fire cult did stand  
With the end of a string firmly fixed in his hand.

As iron to David grew pliant as wax,  
So to me were made patent his tricks and his tracks;  
And I knew that 'twas he who was pulling the string  
When the idol its arm in the temple did swing.

When the Brahmin beheld me, most deep was his shame,  
For 'tis shabby to be caught at so shabby a game.  
He fled from before me but I did pursue,  
And into a well him head foremost I threw.

\* \* \* \* \*

So I finished the rogue, notwithstanding his wails,  
With stones,—for dead men, as you know, tell no tales.

As Sa'di may be said to be the Montaigne or the Voltaire of Persia, so Hafiz, born at the beginning of the fourteenth century only a few years after the death of Sa'di in 1291 A. D., has been compared in his great lyric poetry with Horace.

The tomb of Hafiz, surrounded by an ugly iron grating, lies just off the main road leading into Shiraz from Ispahan, in the midst of a Moslem cemetery where, as is fitting, his grave is the most conspicuous. And yet, it is said to have been due only to chance that Hafiz was permitted to have a Moslem burial, so



askance was he looked upon by orthodox Moslems for his lyrical praises of wine, women, and song, and sweet dalliance in the rose-petaled gardens of Shiraz. Following his death it was only after the decision had been made to leave the question of his burial in consecrated Moslem ground to the chance reference to one of his verses that the scruples of his detractors were overcome when the couplet proved to be:

Fear not to approach the corpse of Hafiz  
Although stained with sin, he will enter heaven.

The distaste of the Moslem priesthood for Hafiz, who has been characterized by Professor Levy as standing "easily and incomparably first among the poets of Persia," is not to be wondered at when a quotation is given from Hafiz's last will and testament:

If toying be true cause of my demise,  
Then bring me to my grave in toper's guise,  
In vine-wood casket make my last abode,  
And put my grave beside the tavern road.  
My corse with tavern-water let them lave;  
On toper's shoulder bear me to the grave.  
With ruby wine let them my dust allay,  
And for sole mourning rite the rebeck play.  
And, when I die—this is my testament—  
Let only mime or minstrel make lament,  
But thou, Hafiz, from wine turn not away;  
Sultans no impost on the drunken lay. (Tr. by Levy)

There is something here of the ribaldry of the popular modern drinking song of:

Oh when I die, don't bury me at all,  
Just pickle my bones in alcohol,

the author of which, it may be presumed, never cherished any illusions regarding the attitude which the Christian clergy might be expected to take toward him as the expresser of comparable sentiments.



Tea house in Luristan  
The two figures to the right are mullahs



Bridge of Valerian, Shushter



Khoramabad in the distance with its citadel. In the foreground, an inscription stone of Darius





· Khoramabad

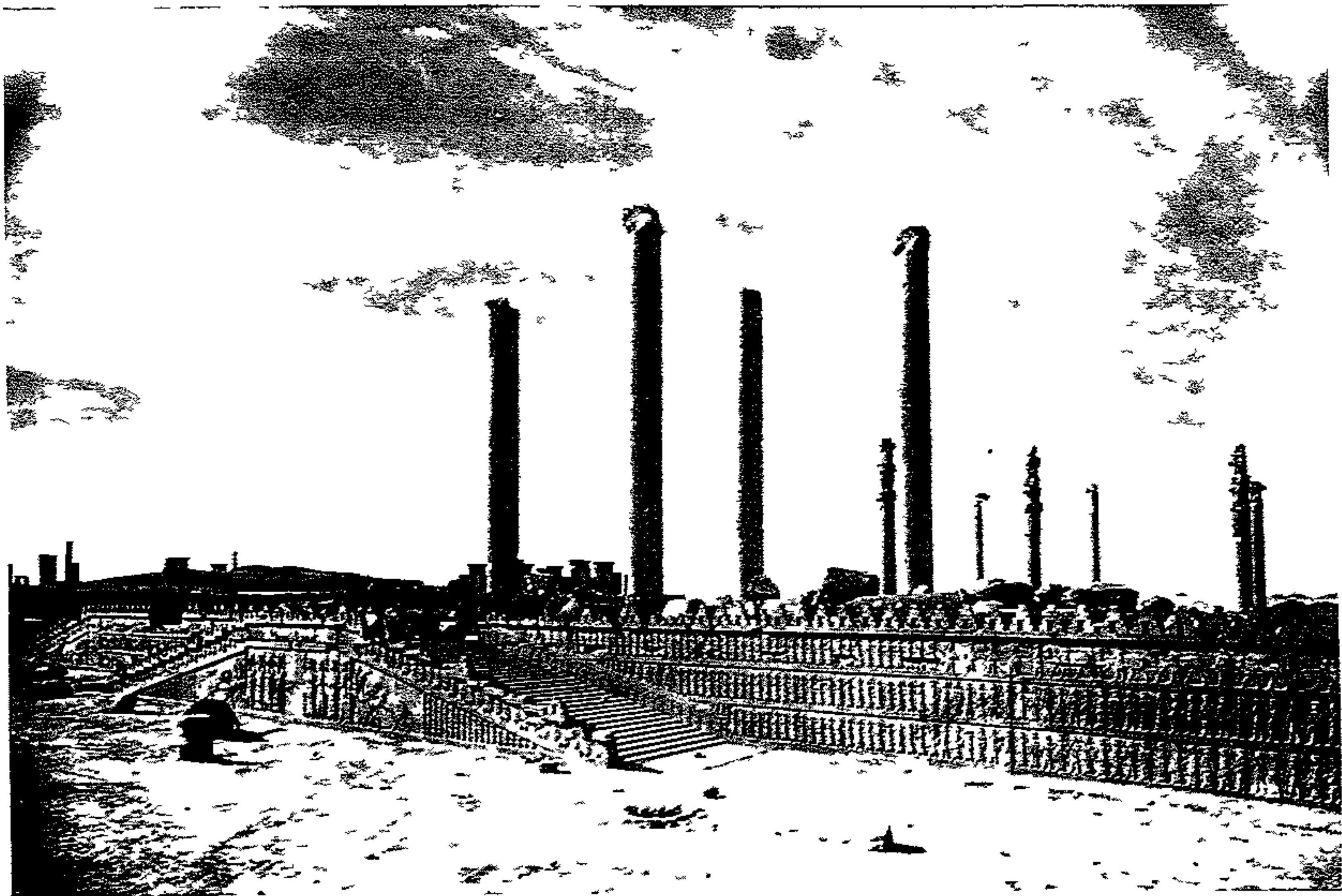


Pol-i-Dokhtar bridge, Luristan





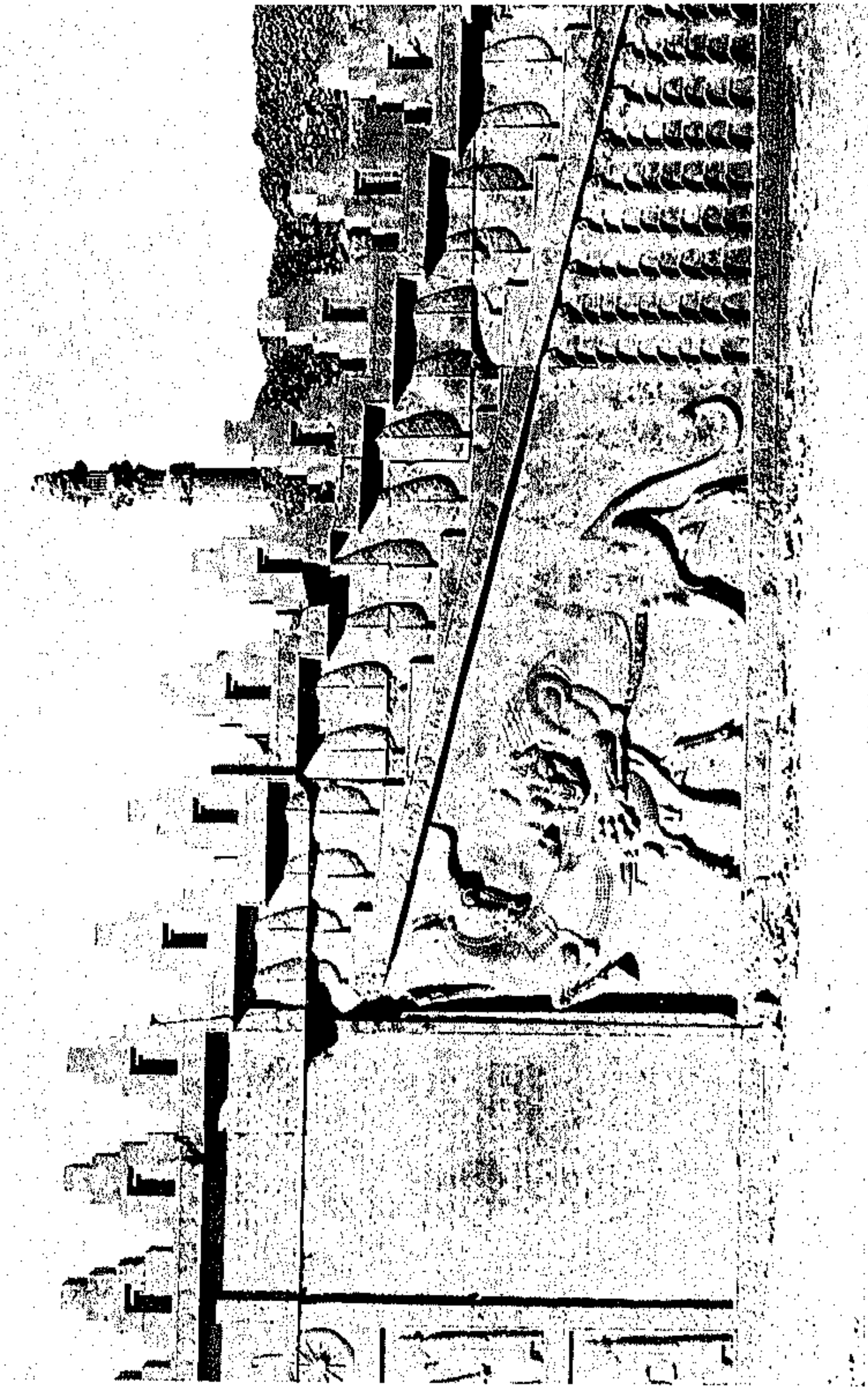
Tomb of Cyrus the Great



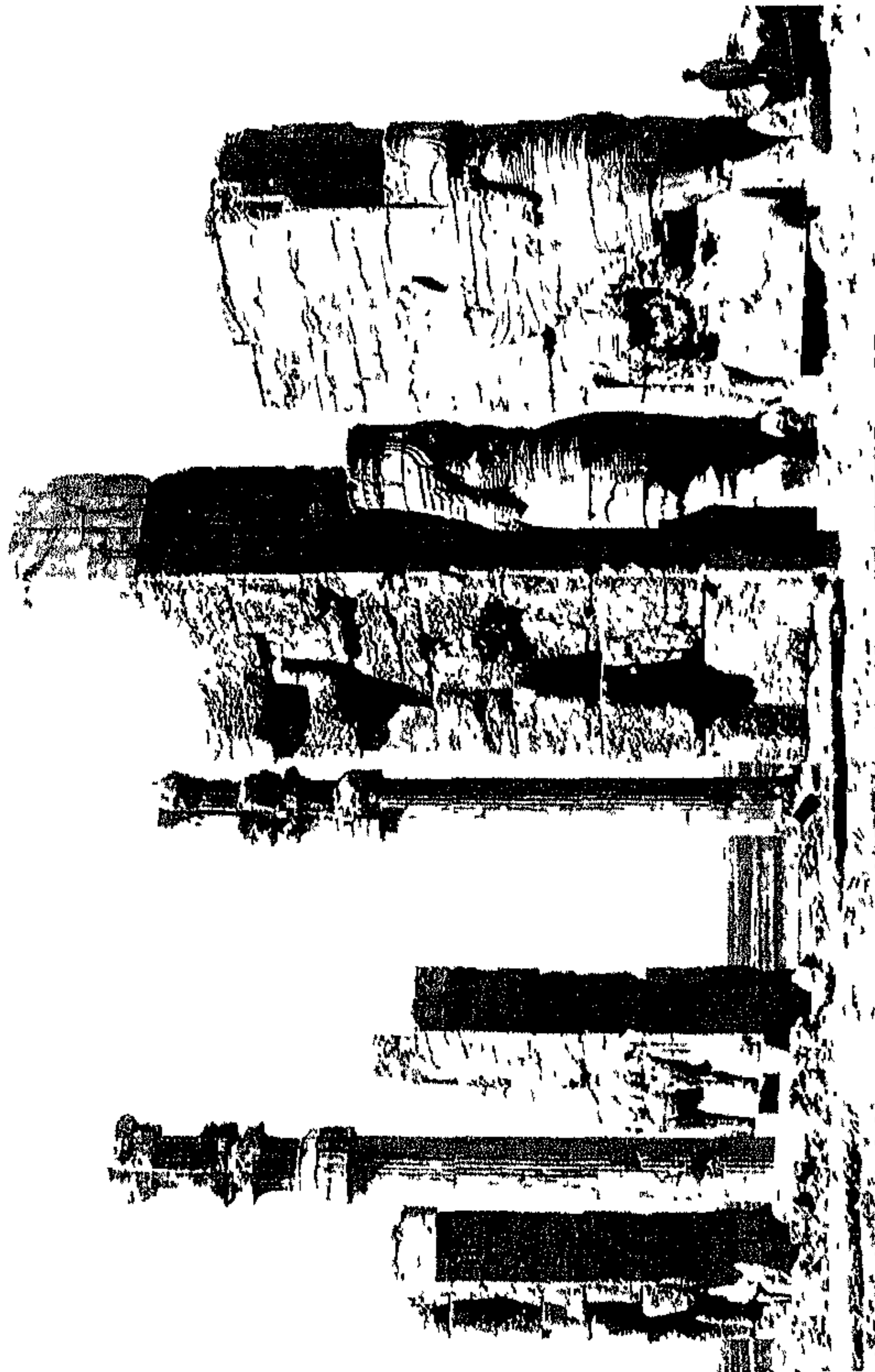
*The Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago*

Newly discovered Apadana stairway, Persepolis





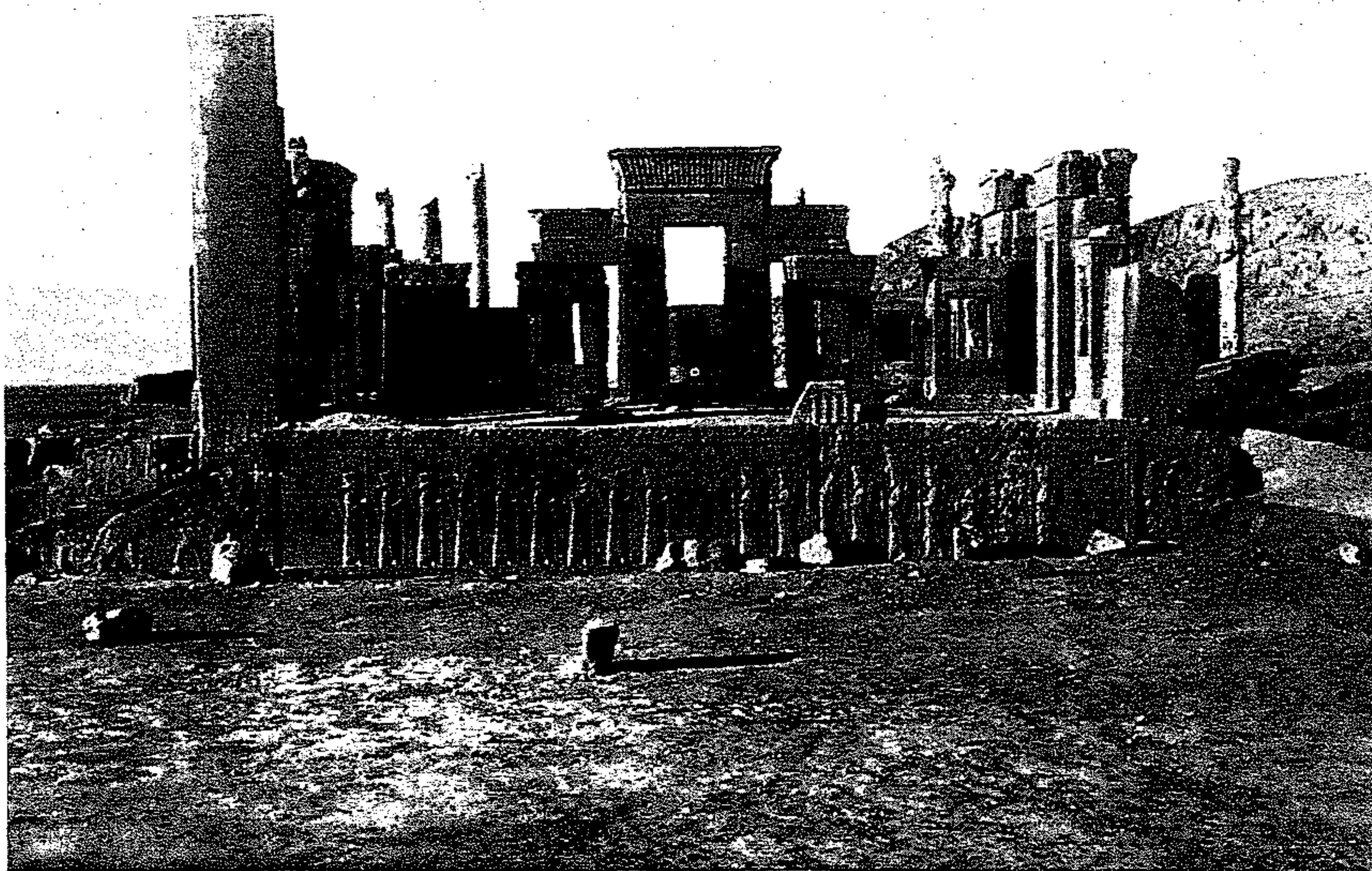
*The Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago*  
Lion and bull relief on great stairway, Persepolis



*The Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago*

*The great gateway at Persepolis*





*The Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago*

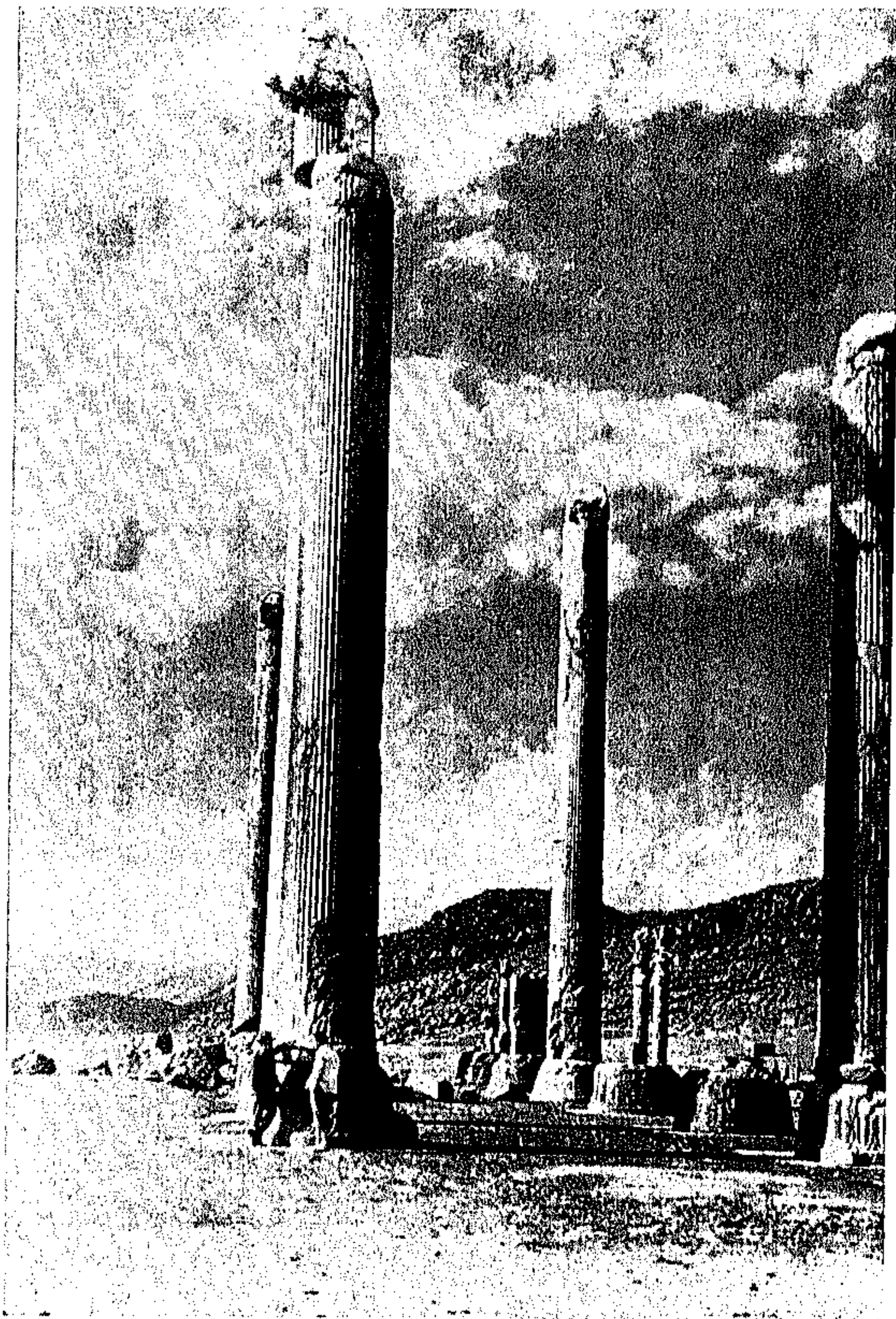
Part of the palace terrace of Persepolis





*The Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago*

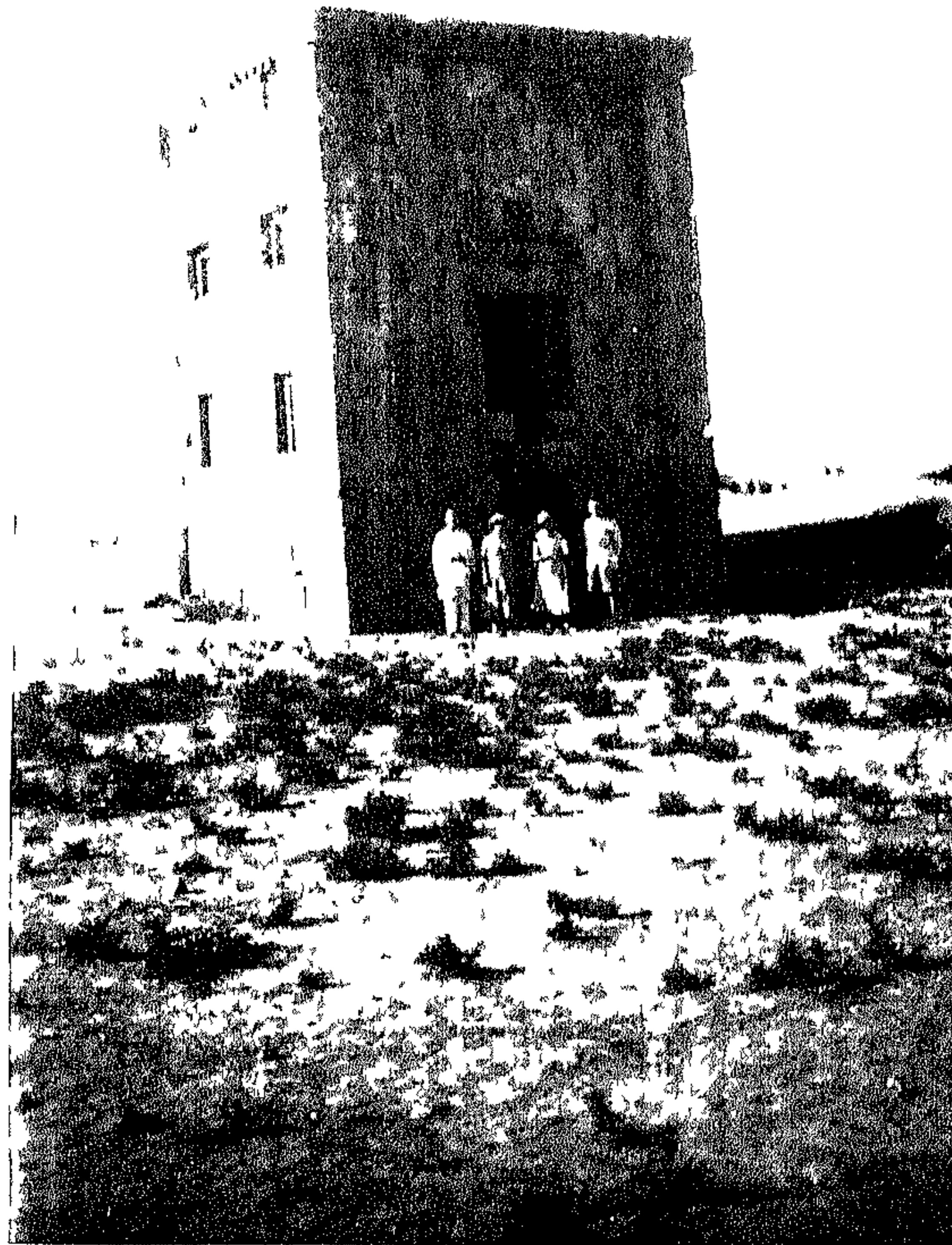
Air view of the entire terrace at Persepolis



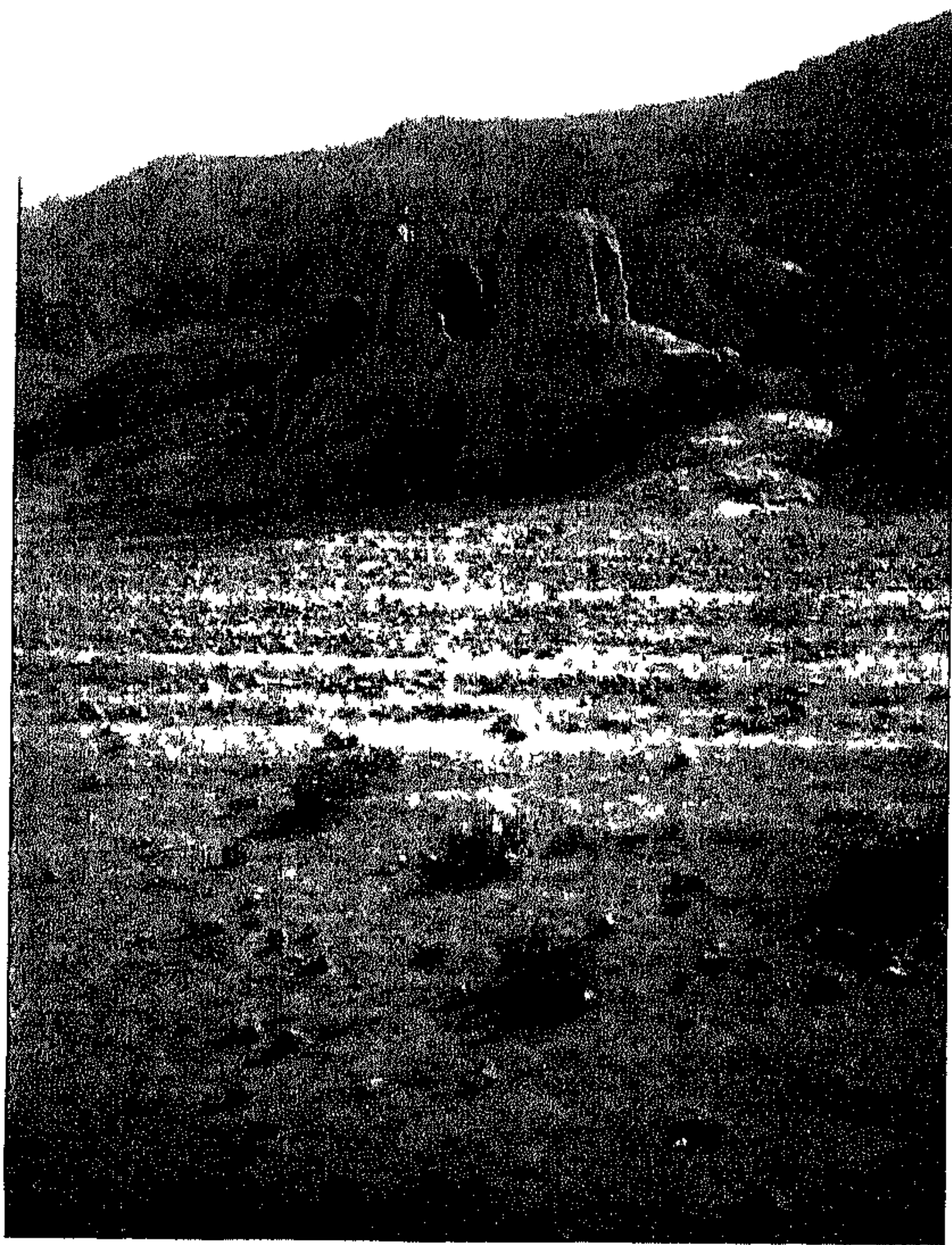
*The Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago*

The superb fluted columns of Persepolis



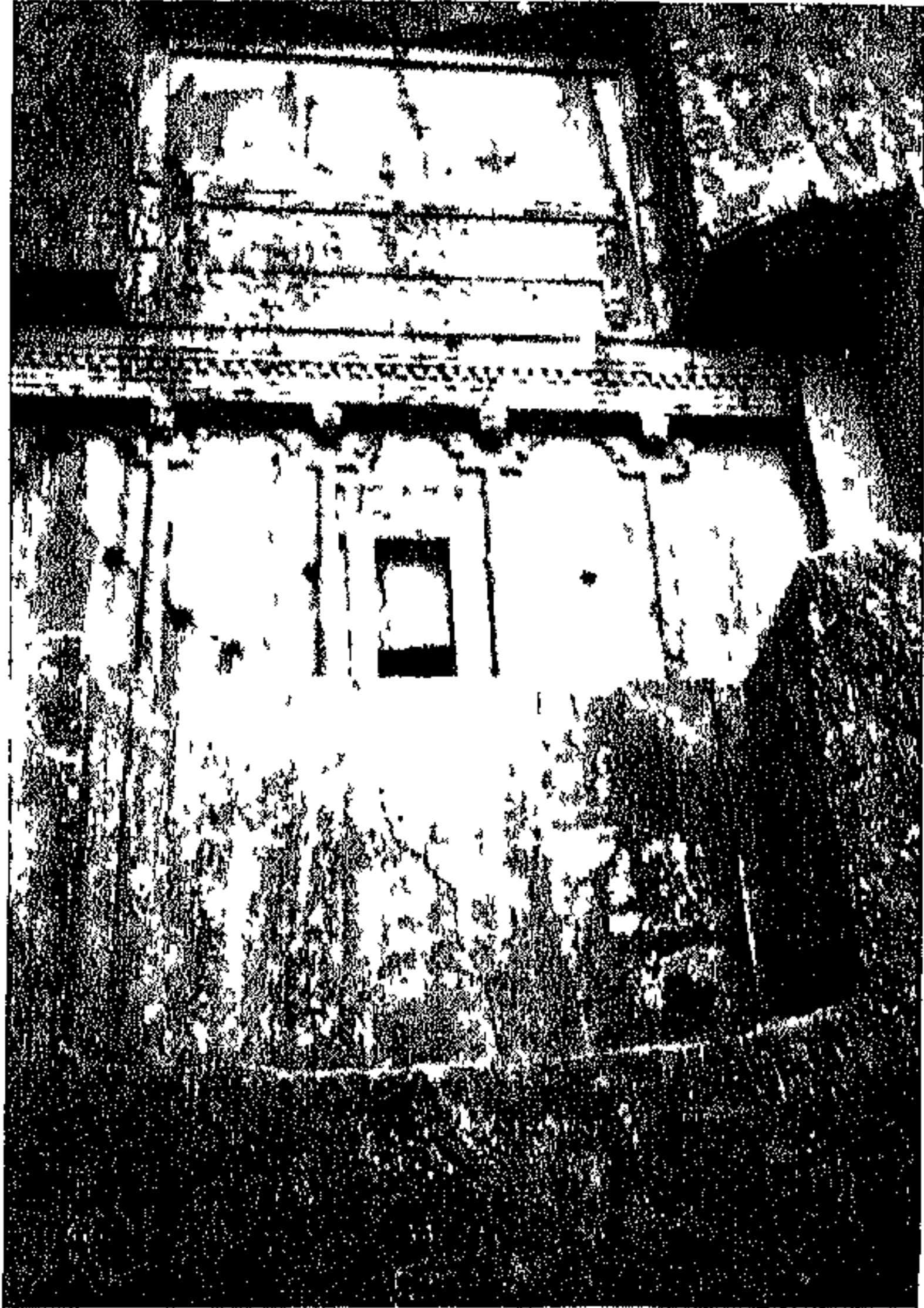


Tomb of Zoroaster, Naksh-i-Rustam

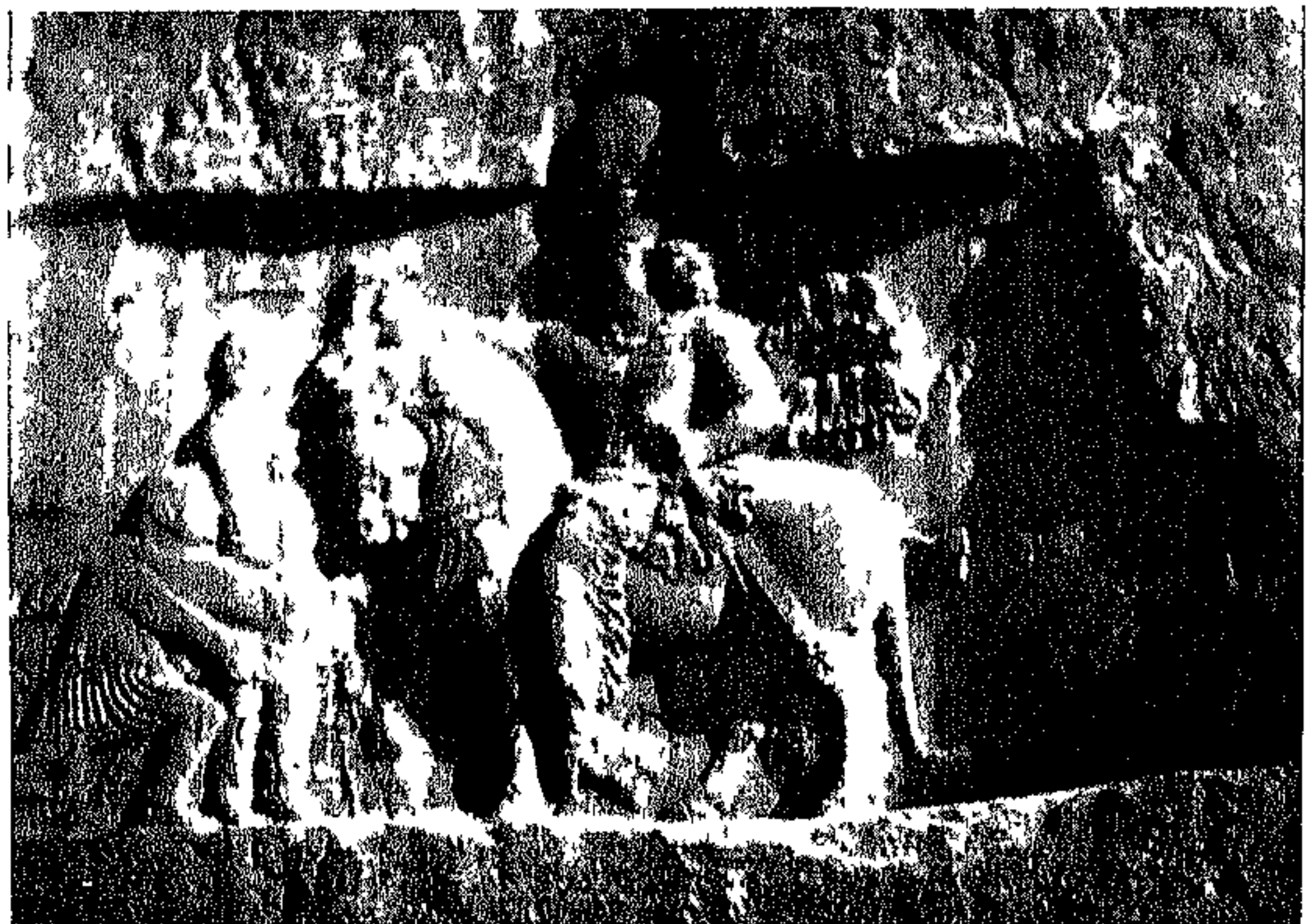


Five altars at Naksh-i-Rustam



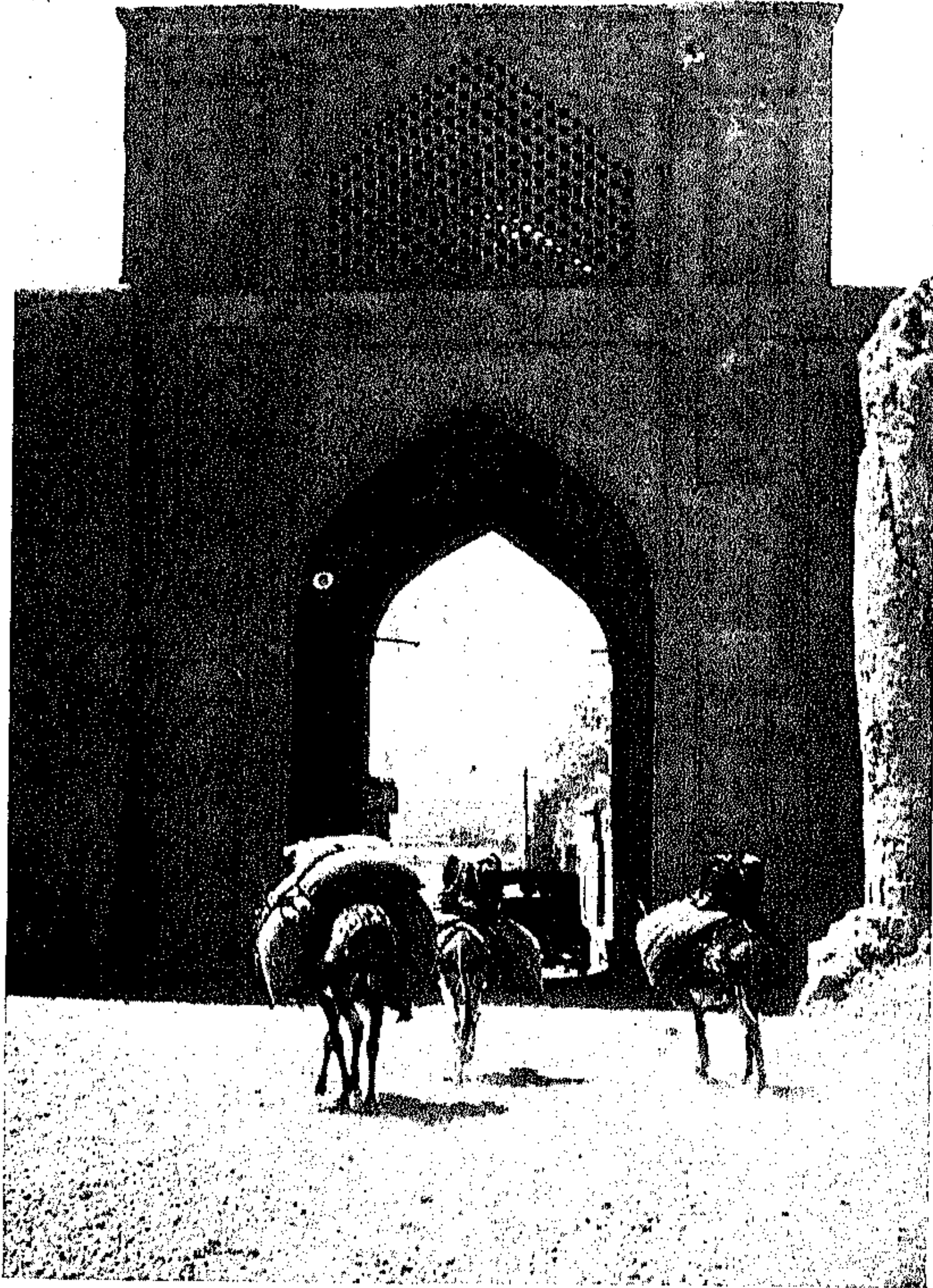


Tomb of Xerxes

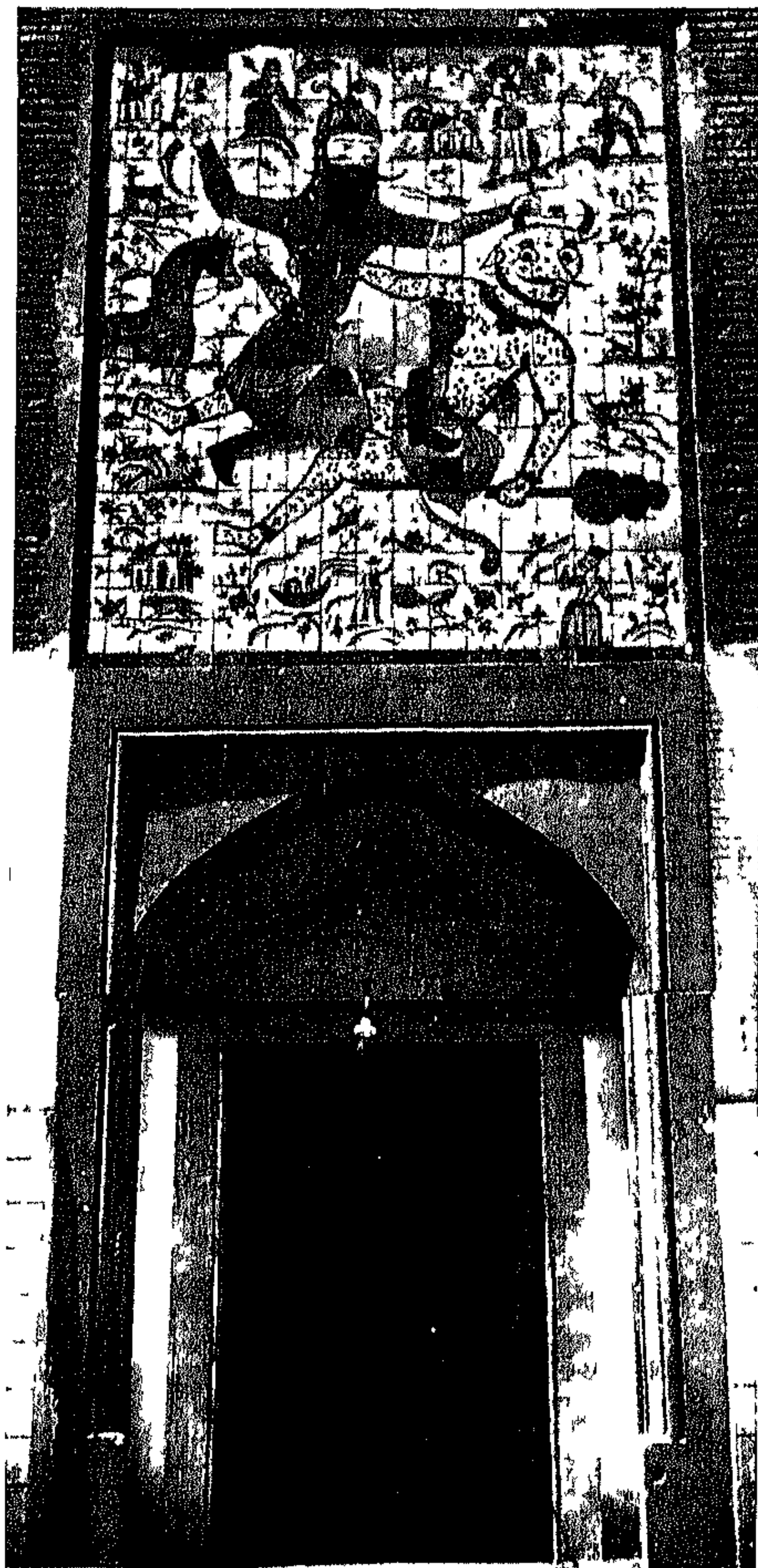


Valerian on bended knee before Shapur, Naksh-i-Rustam

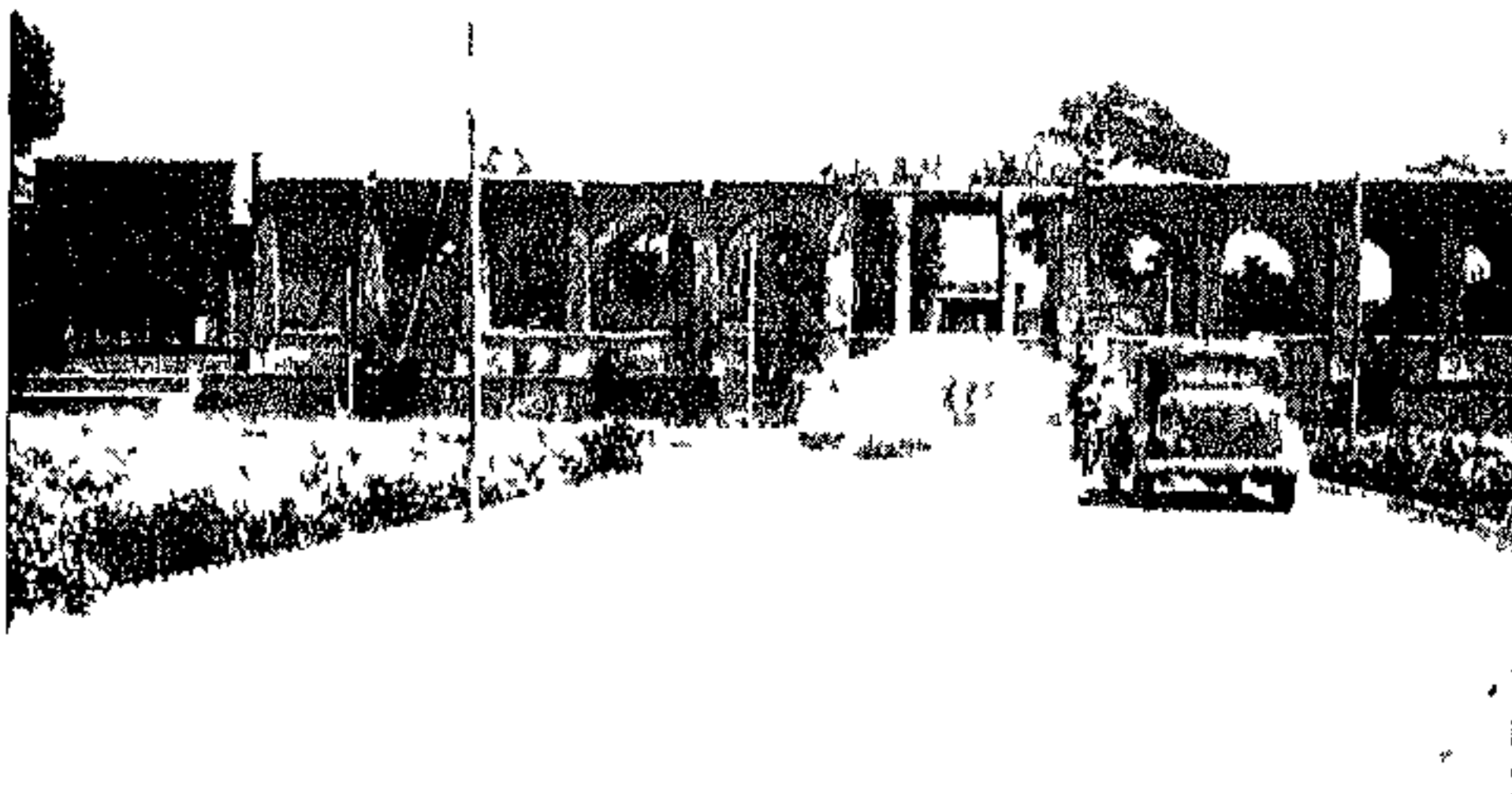




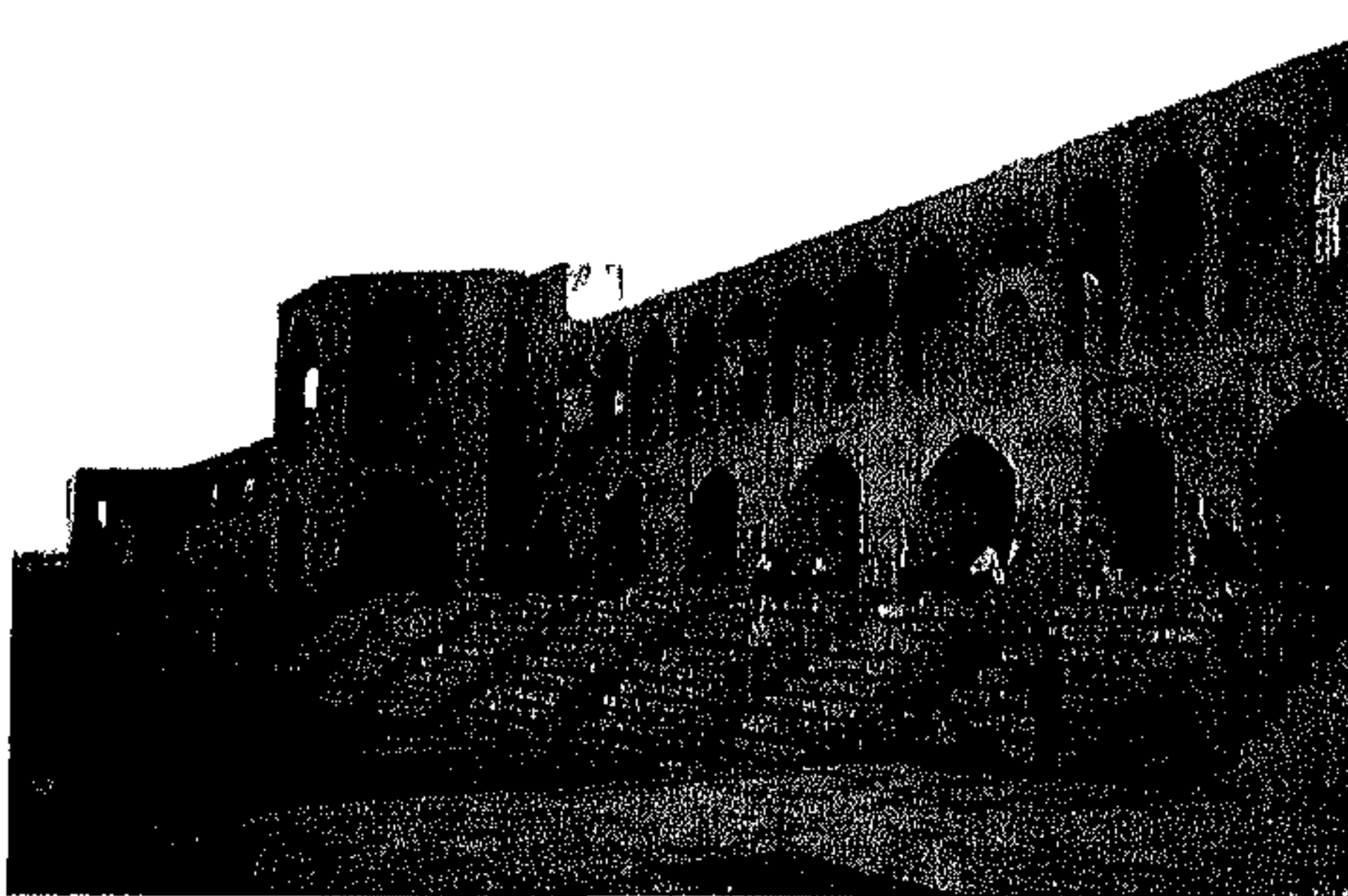
The gateway to Shiraz



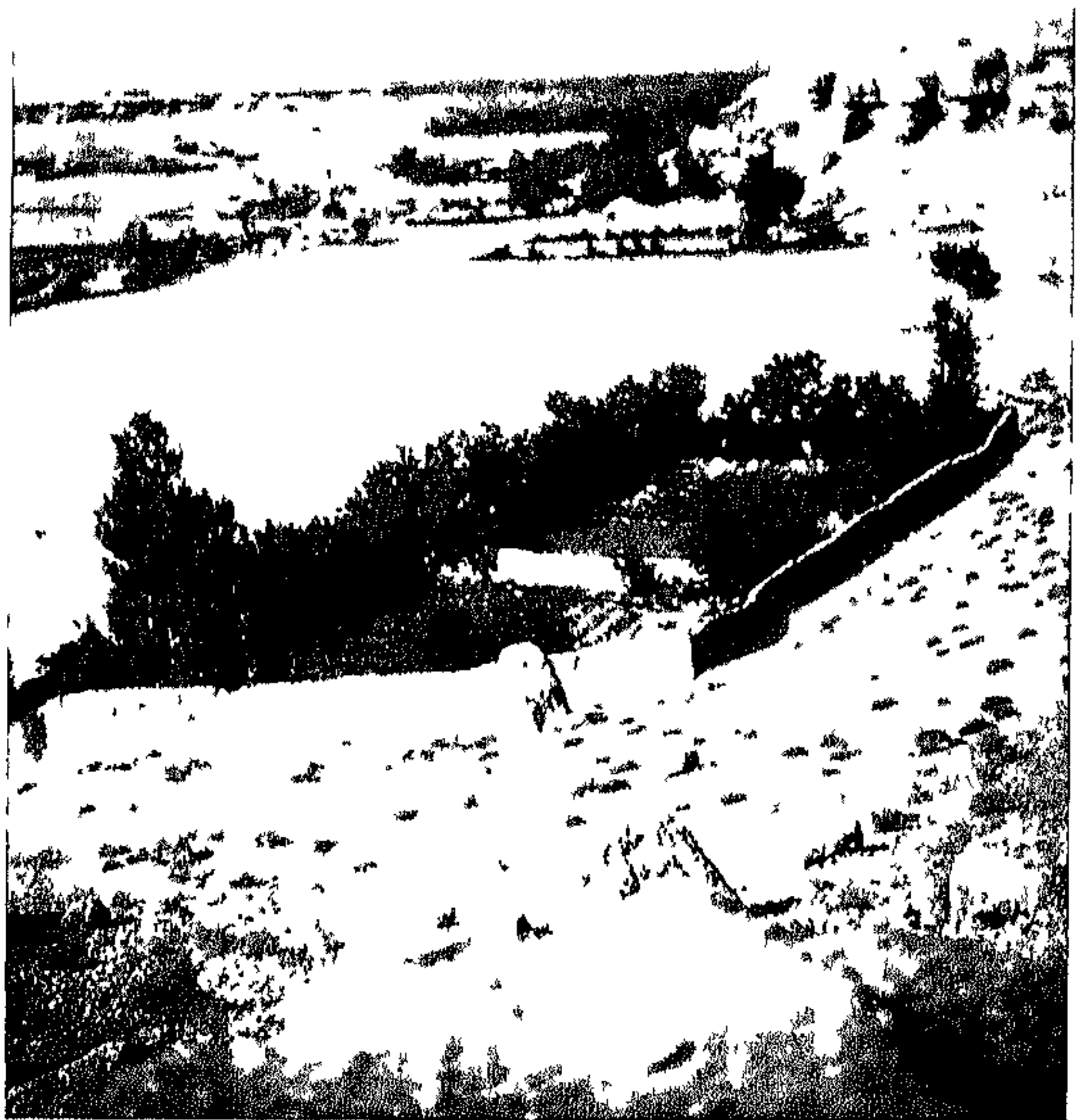
Doorway of citadel, Shiraz



Tomb of Hafiz, Shiraz

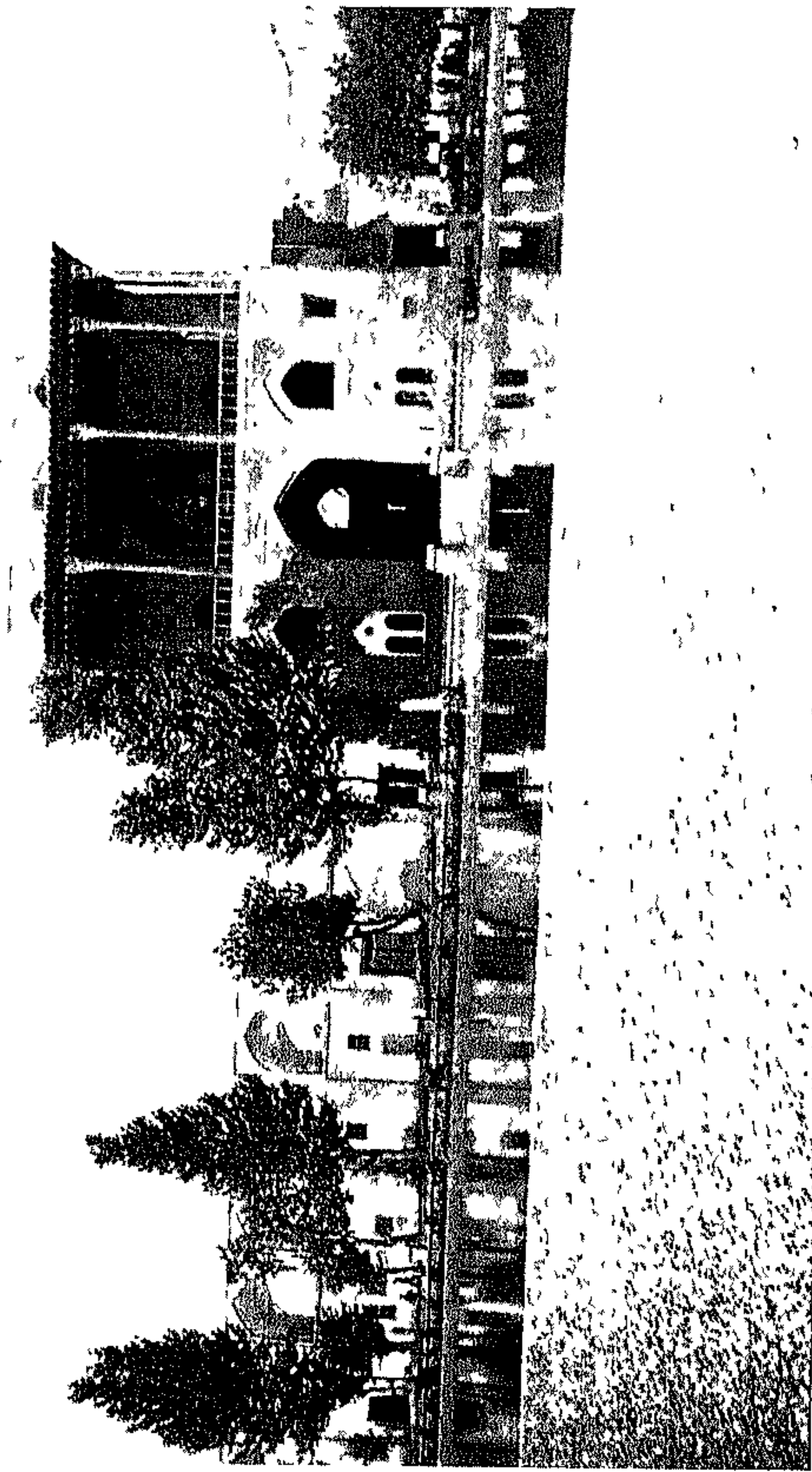


Ispahan bridge

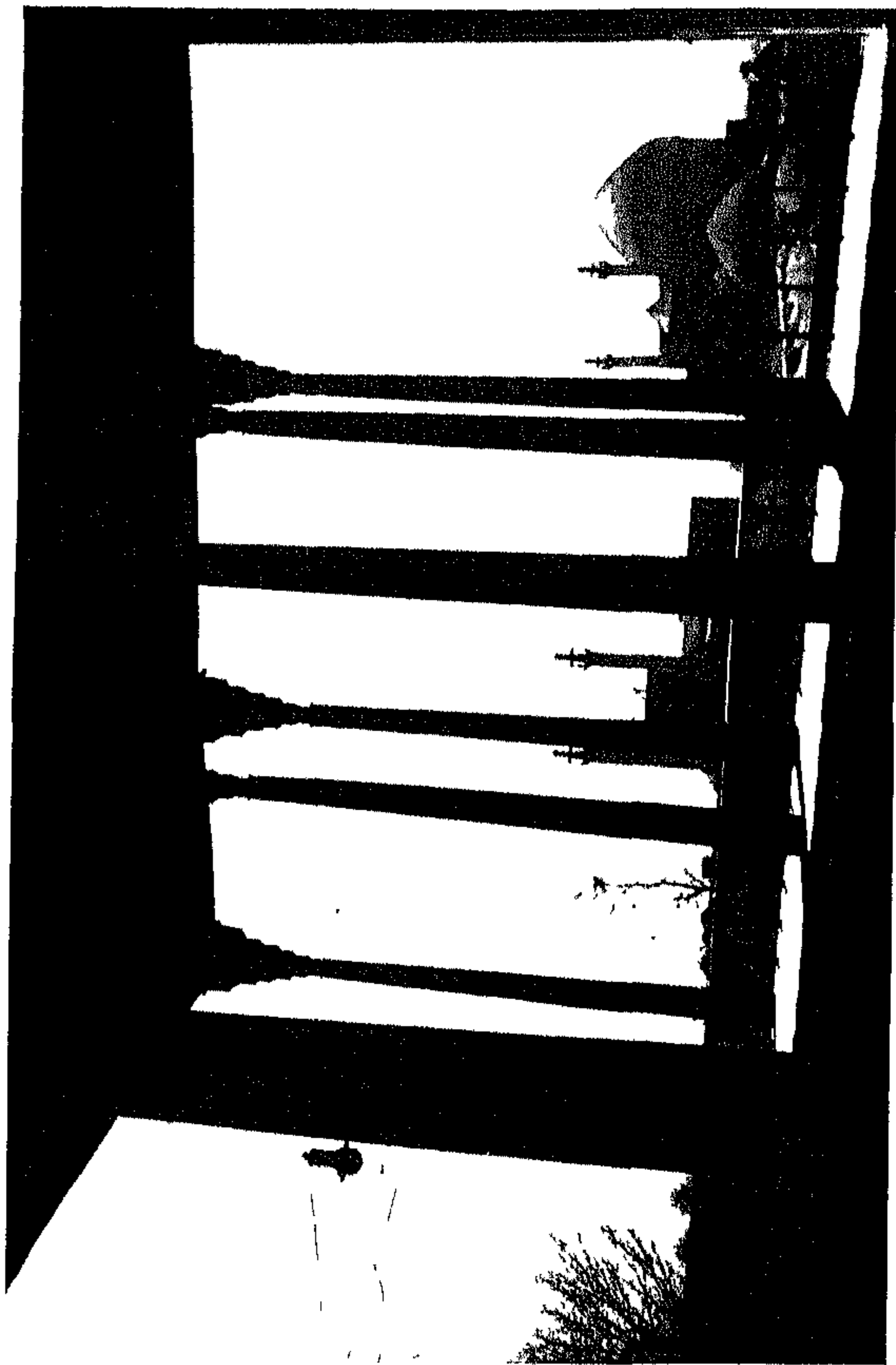


Cultivation at Yezdikhast

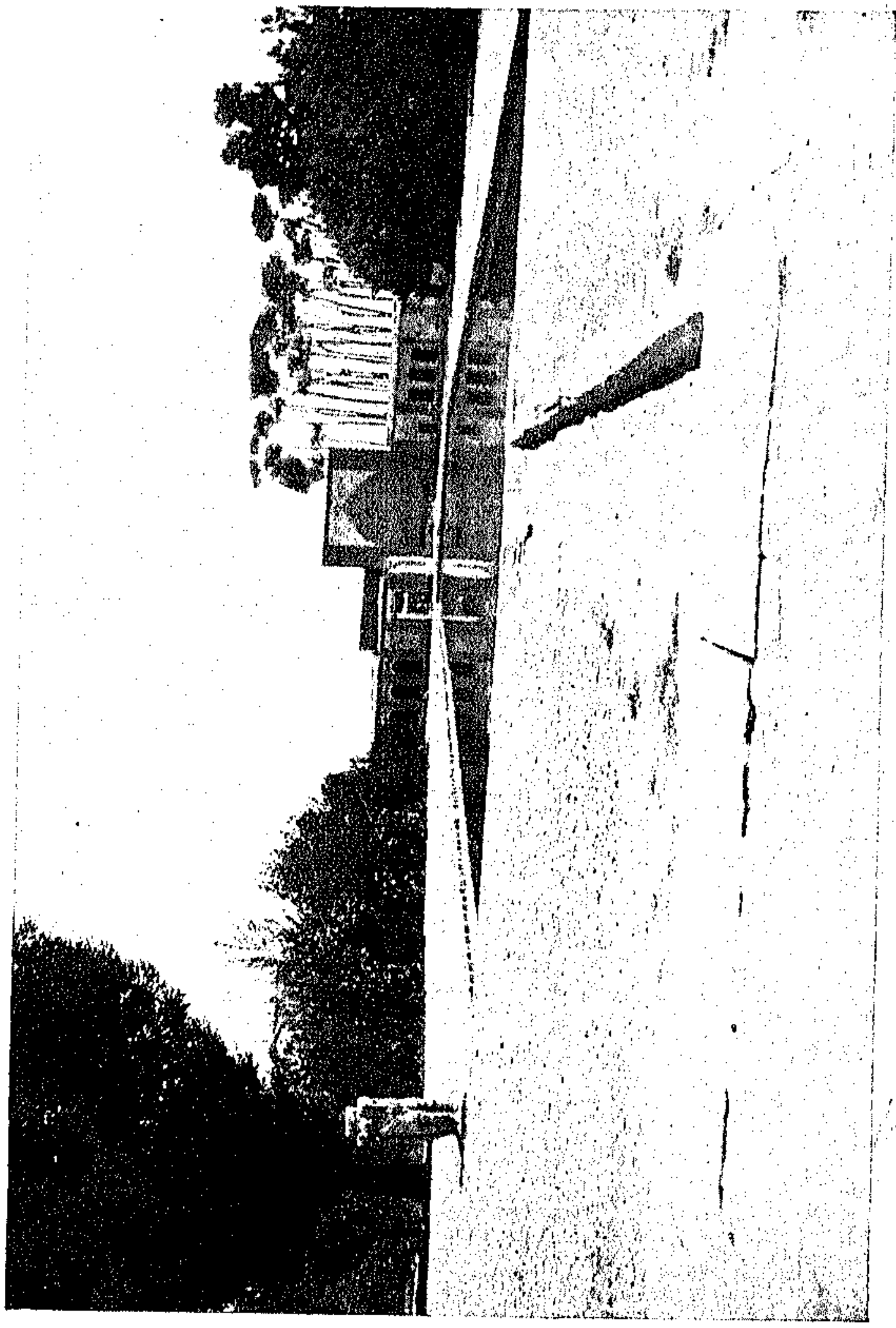




Palace of Ali Kapu, Isfahan

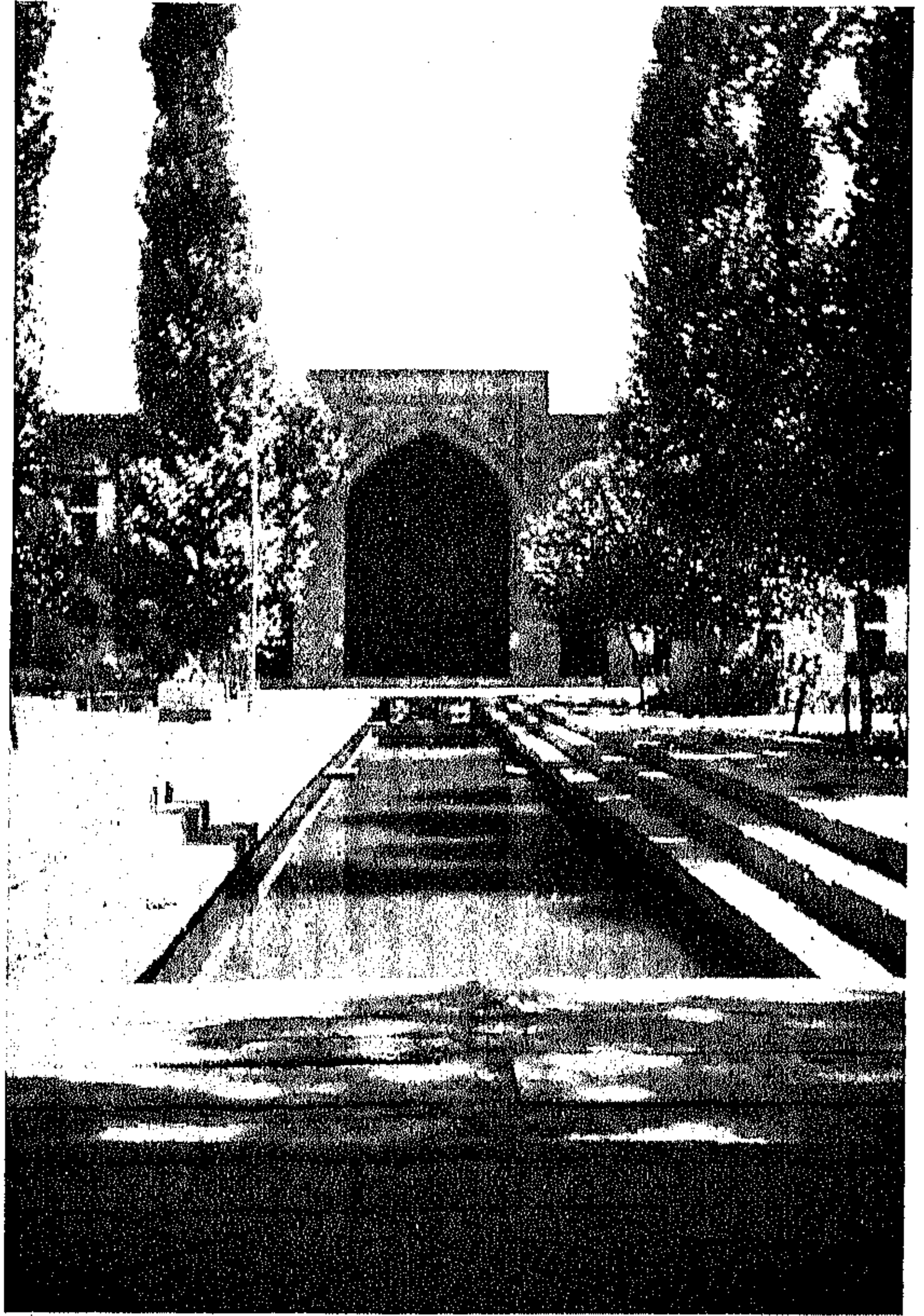


Shah's Mosque, Ispahan, from the porch of the Ali Kapu



Garden of the Chehel Situn, Ispahan

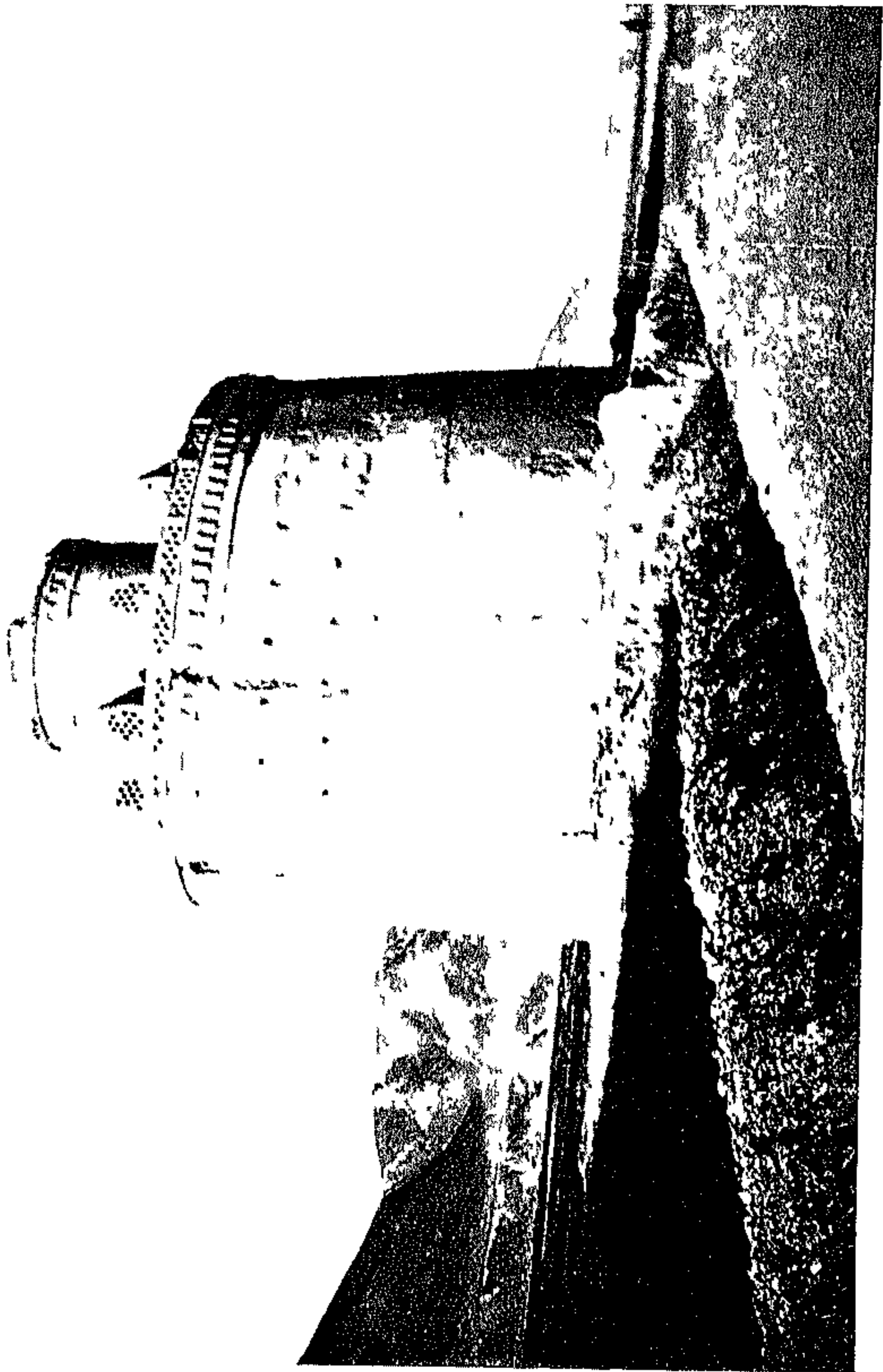




Interior of Medrassch, Ispahan

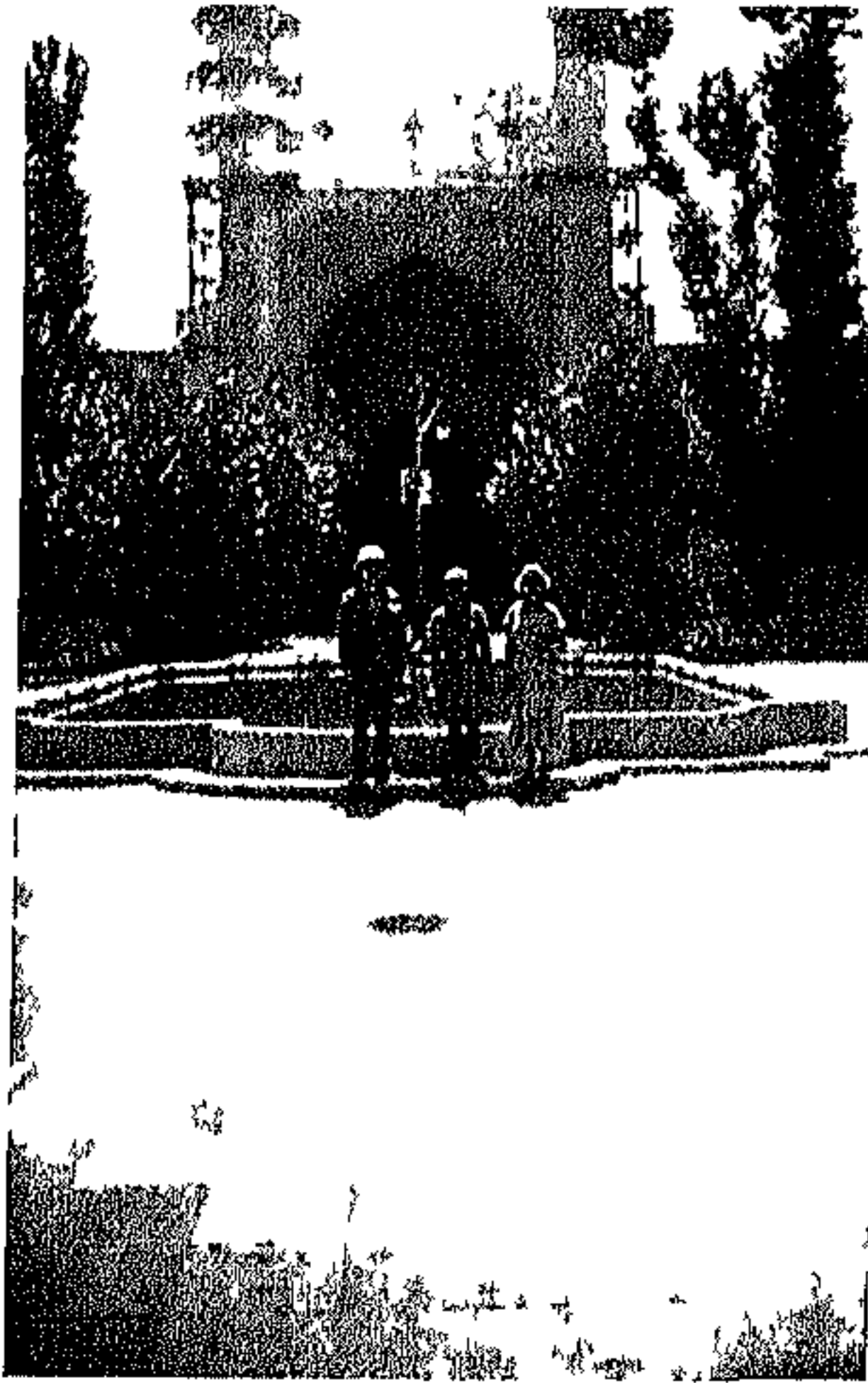






Pigeon Tower near Ispahan

( 1241, 1242 )



In an Ispahan mosque under the protection of the Persian police



Caravanserai near Ispahan

Moreover, some of the odes of Hafiz are so erotic that they have never found publication in English, facts which speak much for the tolerance of the Moslem clergy in permitting his burial in Moslem holy ground.

Legend ascribes to the supposititious interview between Hafiz and the dreaded Tamerlane, and to the ready wit displayed by the poet on that occasion, the sparing of Shiraz from the fate of wholesale destruction suffered by most of the cities incident to the progress of Tamerlane across Persia in his march of conquest.

According to the account of the interview given by Dawlatshah and reproduced by Sykes in his *History of Persia*, Tamerlane, after having sent for Hafiz, upon the former's arrival at Shiraz, spoke to the poet as follows:

I have subdued with the sword the greater part of this earth; I have depopulated a vast number of cities and provinces in order to increase the glory and wealth of Samarcand and Bokhara, the ordinary places of my residence and the seat of my power; yet thou, an insignificant individual, hast pretended to give away both Samarcand and Bokhara as the price of a little black mole setting off the features of a pretty face; for thou hast said in one of thy verses:

If that fair maid of Shiraz would take my heart within  
her hand,  
I'd give Bokhara for the mole upon her cheek, or  
Samarcand.

It might be thought that the situation of Hafiz was indeed an awkward one from which there was no escape. But the mother wit of the poet was equal to the emergency, eliciting from him the explanation, humbly proffered, that, "Alas! O Prince, it is this prodigality which is the cause of the misery in which you see me."

As we take our leave of rose-petaled, cypress-sentined Shiraz, with one last glance at its multiformed gardens dotting the town

and the flashing domes of the mosques, no farewell could be more appropriate than the tribute paid the city in a verse of Sa'di :

O cypress-tree, with silver limbs, this colour and scent of  
thine  
Have shamed the scent of the myrtle plant and the bloom  
of the eglantine.  
Judge with thine eyes, and set thy foot in the garden fair  
and free,  
And tread the jasmine under thy foot, and the flowers of  
the Judas-tree.  
O joyous and gay is the New Year's Day, and in Shiraz  
most of all;  
Even the stranger forgets his home, and becomes its willing  
thrall.

Some travelers, who can perceive no beauty in the ever-changing magical colors suffused over Shiraz, indescribable in their tones in the dawn and at twilight, with no poetry in their souls nor music in their hearts, may, with envious recollections of the comforts of New York and London, find Shiraz just another dirty down-at-the-heel Eastern town. Such travelers would do better to remain at home.

Even Sa'di, however, for all his devotion to Shiraz, was not above becoming bored occasionally with the old home town, as he confessed himself, in one of his more depressed moments, when writing :

My soul is weary of Shiraz, utterly sick and sad,  
If you seek for news of my doings, you will have to ask  
at Baghdad.

The modern traveler, bored by Shiraz, might appropriately express his longing for the Baghdad of the New World. Let us leave such travelers to make their way whither they will while we turn our faces to that jewel among Persian cities, Ispahan, which once was known to Persians as half the world.



### 3. *From Shiraz to Ispahan*

From Shiraz north to Ispahan is a distance of some three hundred miles; with a good motor the journey may be made comfortably in one day. From Persepolis as far as Ispahan the road is one of the best in Persia and other than Persepolis and Pasargadae there is little in the way of interest to detain the traveler as he makes his way northward.

Leaving Persepolis behind after an hour's ride from Shiraz over the most indifferent section of the highway, a series of valleys and mountain ridges of desolate splendor are passed as the road makes its gradual and almost imperceptible ascent to Dehbid, one of the highest towns in Persia with an elevation of seventy-five hundred feet.

Continuing, the road makes its way over the great central plateau region of the country through broad and spacious valleys guarded at either side by the eternally bleak and bare mountain ridges which rear their heads in solemn grandeur over the scene. While the route lacks the variety of that of the eighty-odd mile stretch from Persepolis to Dehbid, the color effects of the shifting rays of the sun upon the limestone hills afford a series of magic pictures which will linger long in the traveler's memory. Abadeh, some fifty-five miles north of Dehbid, and one hundred and seventy-five from Shiraz, with its modern colonnaded main street, offers a convenient and pleasant spot at which to break the journey for lunch, the most suitable place being the municipal garden to the right as the town is entered where *kababs* and melons may be ordered from the shops adjacent to the welcome shade of the little park.

Forty miles beyond is Yezdikhast, one of the most curiously situated towns in the world, perched upon an elongated rocky eminence overlooking a deep gulch, resembling in its situation nothing so much as the prow of a great vessel left stranded in the desert. Obviously, the situation of Yezdikhast was originally dictated by strategic considerations of defense; accordingly, the

site as a place of human habitation must date from a very remote time.

The town is flanked by a precipitous gully to the south and by a less deeply entrenched natural moat to the north; hence access is gained only from the southwest by means of a bridge of wooden beams. On the rocky eminence extending for some four hundred or more yards there have been built tiers of flimsy sun-dried brick dwellings suggestive of rows upon rows of rabbit warrens. At the base of the cliff caves have been cut out of the rock to serve as stables for livestock.

In the eighteenth century a Persian sovereign, passing Yezdikhast, amused himself by causing the inhabitants to be thrown one by one from their dwellings into the ravine below. The nineteenth victim happened to be a *seyyid*, or descendant of the Prophet, whose wife and daughter were ordered to be delivered to the Persian soldiers. This proved too much even for the King's own followers, however accustomed to the ordinary forms of cruelty which distinguished those times. That night the King was attacked in his tent and stabbed to death.

Between Yezdikhast and Ispahan, a distance of some eighty-two miles, the province of Fars, cradle of the Persian nation, is finally left behind, and with it, the Kashgai tribe, the most important within its borders. As the road proceeds northward the country of the Bakhtiari, renowned for their bravery and independence, who have peopled the land to the south and west of Ispahan from remote times, is entered. In the Revolution of 1906 the Bakhtiari took a notable part in challenging the autocratic authority of the Shah, but under Reza Shah Pahlevi and with the measures adopted by him for stamping out the feudal elements in the country, they have fallen upon evil days.

In 1934 the tribal leaders were arrested and many of them shot or sentenced to long terms of imprisonment. Little is left today of that feudal independence which they enjoyed for so many centuries until the advent of the present Shah. The patriarchal life which they led with their flocks and herds in the inaccessible mountains from a time which probably goes back to the first

occupation of Persia by the tribal Aryans, is coming, in common with that of other Persian tribes, to a close. The ancient folk-ways which remain of our prehistoric ancestors, so far as they have been perpetuated, are disappearing one by one under the impact of Occidental progress which is slowly extending its influence eastward. The ancient Aryan ways of Persia are all but relics of the past; in a few decades they will have been relegated to the limbo of time and there will remain in Asia only Arabia, Afghanistan, Thibet and southwestern China where the Western world may find for a little while an early historic stage of man still reproduced.

#### 4. *Ispahan, Once Half the World*

Of all notable cities of the Middle East none exceeds in the sheer beauty of those buildings still remaining as testimony of its former splendors, the noble city of Ispahan. Pietro della Valle, who resided in Ispahan early in the seventeenth century, remarked that he had seen nothing so beautiful as Ispahan in all the East; Fryer in 1677 declared that few cities in the world "surpass it for wealth and none come near it" for its stately buildings, while Father Krusinski, who was a resident there until its sack by the Afghans in 1722, described it so late as that date as the most famous city in the East, exceeding Constantinople in "Bigness, Populousness, Magnificence of Buildings and Riches."

Today, Ispahan is only a vestige of its once proudly proportioned self, since it is exceeded far, in age, by Damascus; in the antiquity of its buildings by Jerusalem; and in the richness and number of its notable edifices by Cairo. From its sack by the Afghans it has never recovered. Yet, in its personification of the Persian artistic tradition, in the architecture of those of its stately edifices which remain, in the paintings and richly ornamented tiles of the interiors of certain of those buildings, Ispahan well deserves a rank by the side of Cairo, Damascus, Jerusalem, Samarcand and Bokhara. Of Baghdad there is little need to speak since only its name and the memory of its once splendid past remain to commemorate its former glory.

Apart from its mosques, the oldest buildings of the city, the architectural remains of Ispahan which dignify the city and give it its present title to fame are the products of the reign of Shah Abbas, of relatively recent memory, a contemporary of Queen Elizabeth and of Shakespeare in England, of Henry IV in France, of Gustavus Adolphus in Sweden, of Akbar in India, and of Captain John Smith and the founding of Jamestown in Virginia. At the time the first representative assembly in the New World was meeting in a House of Burgesses on Jamestown Island, Ispahan was rising around the oases set in the desert plains and mountains surrounding it to the supreme height of its glory.

That the site of the modern city dates back many centuries is evident in the presence of an ancient shrine of brick and stucco surmounting a conical-shaped hill some seven hundred feet in height on the outskirts of the town. Professor Jackson has identified the temple as associated with the Zoroastrian rites and as having once served as a fire altar, at least fifteen hundred years ago, with a probability of its dating from Achaemenian times. No trace of an inscription is to be found anywhere among the crumbling ruins of the fragmentary structures of this ancient edifice which is slowly returning to the natural elements from which it was once wrought.

Ispahan would seem to have been known to the Greeks as Aspadana and to have received its present name in the early Mohammedan period. It fell successively under the assaults of the Seljuk Turks, of Genghis Khan, and of Tamerlane, the last of whom left behind a pyramid of seventy thousand skulls as a memorial of his conquest. It was not until the reign of Shah Abbas, however, that the city underwent, as the newly established capital of his dominions, an extensive and radical transformation. And, notwithstanding its sack at the hands of the Afghans, and the neglect into which it subsequently fell under the Kajars, it still stands pre-eminent in beauty among all Persian cities and most representative of that supreme gift for art which has entitled Persia to take rank with other nations of the world as one of the great sources of man's artistic genius.



The artistic endowment of Persia, naturally, did not spring full-blown into appearance in the reign of Shah Abbas; but, under that monarch's encouragement it did reach the acme of its manifold expression in textiles, in ceramics, in painting and, above all, in architecture, of which the splendid buildings of his time which remain in Ispahan are visible and notable testimony.

In architecture Persian tradition went back to the Achæmenian palaces of Persepolis; under the Sassanians there was developed the use of the arch as the central element in construction. The transition from the elliptical to the pointed arch, which came to distinguish the city gate, the mosque portal, the long bazaar aisle, the entrance to the caravanserai, giving supreme distinction to the famous bridges of Ispahan, was probably a development of the ninth century and it was in Persia that it attained its highest and fullest expression. But Persia, in addition to its contributions to architecture in the development of the arch, and of the vault and the dome as well, succeeded to a singular degree in combining those three forms and in bringing them into harmonious relation the one with the other.

Of the many splendid and spacious buildings which distinguished Ispahan in the days of Shah Abbas, those which retain something approaching their original character are the Allah Verdi Khan and Khaju Bridges, the Chehel Situn Palace, the Ali Kapu Pavilion, the Mesjid-i-Shah and Sheikh Lutfullah Mosques, and a portion of the bazaars. The last four were grouped about the Meidan Shah, or Royal Square, which has come to enjoy world renown as one of the most imposing and noble areas of its kind in the world. So it was termed as long ago as 1664 by Thévenot, the great French traveler, and so it remains to this day.

From this great square, a quarter of a mile in length and an eighth of a mile in width, entrance was had to the extensive royal palace ground to the west by the gate of the Ali Kapu, and from the eminent balcony of this building the Shah and his courtiers surveyed games of polo played on the great open area beneath.

The goal posts of stone still stand at both ends of the square,

but it has been many years since the *meidan* re-echoed to the hoofs of polo ponies and to the sound of the impact of the polo stick on the ball.

But polo has a history which extends beyond that of the Royal Square of Ispahan and beyond even that of the city itself, being the kind of game which would naturally lend itself to development among a people of such expert horsemanship as the Persians are known to have been from the time of their early pastoral and nomadic life. It is not known to what remote period of antiquity the history of the game extends but, according to tradition, Alexander the Great was sent a polo ball and stick from Persia as a hint that he should concern himself with nothing more serious than that game. In accepting the gift Alexander is said to have made answer that he would consider the polo ball as the earth and himself as the stick. Tamerlane later played the game with human skulls as balls, while its widespread use in the East is evidenced in the quatrain of Omar Khayyam :

The Ball no Question makes of Ayes and Noes,  
But Right or Left as strikes the Player goes;  
And He that toss'd thee down into the Field,  
*He* knows about it all—He knows—*HE* knows!

At the northern extremity of the great square is the entrance to the bazaars whose portals are of outstanding beauty and magnificence, contrasting strangely with the dirt and dust and disarray of the stalls of the merchants to which they give access.

On the eastern side of the square is the Mosque of the Sheikh Lutfullah, built by Shah Abbas, whose brilliantly tiled interior and exterior and splendid dome color the scene and give it an unmistakable character of Eastern magnificence.

At the southern end of the square is the Royal Mosque, erected by Shah Abbas in 1612 at a cost of almost a million dollars. From its great arched doorway to the innermost recesses of its courts the mosque, which may be visited by Christians in the company of a police officer, is one of surpassing beauty. Unless it be the mosque at Meshed, there is no Moslem shrine in Persia in any

way comparable to the Royal Mosque of Ispahan. A unique distinction which it possesses is the skillful manner in which its architect succeeded in bringing the eastward facing prayer niche of the mosque into conformity with the north and south axis of the square.

Whatever the great merits of the two mosques facing the square and those of the superb entrance of the bazaar, there can be little gainsaying the fact that the most striking and original building on the great *meidan* is the Ali Kapu, or royal pavilion. For all its slender proportions, it completely dominates the scene. Over a great archway fronting upon the square is superimposed a spacious veranda supported by wooden columns, the whole abutting a square-shaped building of several stories in whose interior rooms are preserved in myriad forms that genius for ornamentation achieved by Persian artists in the time of Shah Abbas.

Within the gateway of the Ali Kapu was formerly a sacred stone in the form of a step which even the king might not touch and over which he might pass only on foot. The traveler, Tavernier, wrote of it that:

Tis the custom of all Ambassadors to salute the Gate of Ali by reason of a white marble stone made like an asses back, and which serves for a step; being, as they report, brought anciently out of Arabia, where Ali liv'd. That day that the new king receives his Ensignia of Royalty, he goes to stride over that Stone, and if by negligence he should chance to touch it, there are four guards at the gate that would make a show of thrusting him back again.

On the great porch above, the Shah received ambassadors of foreign powers at No-Ruz in the midst of courtiers clothed in the finest examples of the supremely rich cloths of gold and silver woven by the textile workers of Ispahan. Chardin, who visited the court a little after the time of Shah Abbas, declared that "no part of the world can afford anything more magnificent or rich, or more splendid or bright."

In the Ali Kapu or in one of the numerous palaces of the extensive gardens to which it gave entrance, where only the

Chel Situn remains today, the great embassies which were attached to Ispahan in the seventeenth century were received by the Shah. They have been described by many travelers who frequented Ispahan in this its golden age. Perhaps the best accounts have been left by Olearius (1637) and Chardin (1672).

Chardin has described the pomp displayed on the occasion of the bearing of the presents from the ambassadors to the Shah, for every embassy was judged by the richness and variety of its gifts. There followed on the *meidan* "Diversions" and "Combats," including wrestling, fencing, casting of darts and javelins, fights between wild beasts, and polo engaged in by one hundred and fifty persons on each side.

Olearius has taken us, in his description, within the Shah's Palace itself where the ambassadors and their suites were invited to dine. Three hundred flagons of gold were employed as drinking utensils, the flagon of the King being of rubies and turquoises. After drinking much wine a cloth-of-gold brocade was laid upon the ground—the guests being seated on the floor with their legs bent beneath them in Oriental fashion—while meat was served in great vessels of gold "made like the Milk-pails in France."

During the dinner the guests were entertained with dancing by the "handsomest Curtezans of the City, who, beside the Tribute they yearly pay the king" were, as Olearius observed, "obliged to come to Court, to divert the Prince, whenever he sends for them." Olearius adds that "we were told that a man might have his choice of them for a Tumain" (a *toman*, perhaps the equivalent to five dollars). Fryer, the British surgeon, who visited Ispahan a little later in 1677, however, remarked upon the "costly whores in this City, who will demand a hundred Thomands for one Night's Dalliance, and expect a Treat besides of half the price." He added that "these while their Wit and Beauty last, outshine the ladies of the highest Potentate, and brave it through the Town with an Attendance superior to the wealthiest."

Due to the severe restrictions placed upon the activities of the women of the Persian's household who were kept rigorously in seclusion, courtesans naturally enjoyed high favor in Ispahan at



this time as they were alone permitted to appear publicly with men. Hence the great importance which they possessed at the Court and their great number in Ispahan which was estimated in the seventeenth century to be no less than forty thousand.

The richly decorated rooms of the Ali Kapu and those of the adjacent Chehel Situn, despite the neglect into which they fell after the passing of the Sefavids two hundred years ago, evidence in the most striking manner the artistic splendors of that period. Here the supreme artistic achievements of the Persians in surface decoration, including both tile work and painting, are best preserved and the period of Shah Abbas in particular most magnificently commemorated.

The Ali Kapu represents only one of a great number of buildings which once formed the palace area in Ispahan, extending from the western side of the *meidan* to the far side of the Avenue of the Chehar Bagh some distance to the east. Chardin estimated that this great palace area, consisting of gardens, pavilions, courts and palaces, great and small, possessed a circumference of no less than four and one-half miles. Doctor Bell in 1717 mentions the presence of no less than seven palaces in or adjoining the city. A few years later the city was sacked by the Afghans and the capital transferred ultimately to Teheran under the Kajars. Buckingham, in 1829, found remnants of the Palace of Haft Dest, the Palace of the Eight Paradises, the Talar Jumeelah, with stables for a thousand horses adjoining it, a palace erected by the Kajar Fath Ali Shah, the Palace of Farahabad, the Chehel Situn and the Ali Kapu. All that remains now of these once noble buildings are the Ali Kapu and the Chehel Situn.

The Chehel Situn, or Hall of the Forty Columns, with the Ali Kapu the most striking edifice in Ispahan, is situated to the northeast of the Ali Kapu a little distance removed from the *meidan*. The building consists of a great porch supported by twenty fluted wooden columns giving entrance to a series of rooms on the ground floor where the Shah was accustomed to receive in audience the ambassadors accredited to him, who were not received in the Ali Kapu, or his own ministers of state. Both on the outer

walls of the veranda, as well as within the smaller rooms of the interior, are a series of exquisite paintings of Persian life more after the Chinese than the European manner. Within the great reception hall is a series of paintings after the Occidental style portraying scenes from the Shah's court, including portraits of Europeans in attendance upon that court in costumes of the time.

There is a curious story related by Malcolm, one of the first British envoys to Persia in the nineteenth century, and one of the first subsequent to the embassy of Sir Dodmore Cotton, two centuries previously, regarding the use to which these pictures were put on the occasion of the arrangements for the reception by the Shah of Malcolm and his mission.

In his account of the incident written in the third person in that most entertaining of travel books, *Sketches of Persia*, Sir John Malcolm, who refers to himself always as "Elchee," or "Envoy," introduces the subject by remarking upon the many discussions which were required with the Persian authorities upon his arrival at Ispahan about the forms to be observed incident to the Shah's reception of him.

Upon reaching that city he was waited upon by a secretary of the principal minister who, "after many apologies and explanations regarding the minute attention to ceremonies at the Persian Court," stated that it was expected that the envoy would put on garments suited to the occasion. Malcolm made answer that he could wear no dress except that of his country:

The Meerza smiled and said they were better informed upon such subjects than the Elchee imagined. He then produced a parcel; and after opening a number of envelopes, he showed several small pictures of ambassadors who had visited Persia two centuries ago. One, which was called the painting of the English representative, and believed to be Sir Anthony Shirley, was dressed in the full costume of the time of Queen Elizabeth. "This," said the Meerza, "is the pattern which it is hoped you adopt, as his majesty desires to follow in all points the usage of the Seffavean kings, since they well understood what was due to the dignity of the throne of Persia."

The Elchee could not help smiling at this proposition; but seeing the Meerza look grave, he begged pardon, and told him that when he saw Hajee Ibrahim he would satisfy him fully on this subject. The minister came soon afterwards into the room, and was much entertained at the account of the changes which fashion had made in our dress since the days of good Queen Bess. "Well, well," said he, in his short but forcible manner, "our habits are so different from yours on this point that the mistake is not surprising; and though I do not altogether like a usage which makes children laugh at the garments of their grandfathers, every country has a right to its own customs, and to these its representatives should adhere."

Various writers have expended much effort in the endeavor to compose the seeming discrepancy between the number of columns supporting the porch of the Chehel Situn, namely twenty, and the title of the building as the Hall of the Forty Columns. The simplest explanation would seem to be that the number forty is proverbially employed in the Near East to denote a considerable number, as in the case of Persepolis and the forty towers, or Ali Baba and the forty thieves.

The derivation of the great porches of the Ali Kapu and the Chehel Situn has been traced to a style employed two thousand years before by the Medes. They are among the finest examples of verandas to be found in the architecture of the world. Whether or not their architectural conception is indeed to be related to a time so far removed as the period of the ancient Medes there can be little dispute that their design evidences an artistic sense of long duration and of assured depth.

Both buildings have suffered much from the hand of time and it would even appear, from the contemporary account left by Father Krusinski, that the Chehel Situn underwent a restoration a century after its construction by Shah Abbas owing to damage occasioned by fire during the reign of Shah Hussein. To this there must be added the damage the interiors of both edifices have suffered from the hands of man. A greater part of the exquisite interior decorations in the form of mural paintings and

tile work has been covered over with layers of whitewash which is being removed, as far as that is possible, incident to the restoration of the most outstanding historic monuments of the artistic past of Persia left in Ispahan.

The Chehel Situn consists of four general compartments of which the outermost is the pillared veranda which faces a great enclosed pool of water, the indispensable part of every Persian garden. On either side of the porch are small rooms, presumably anterooms to the audience hall, containing mural paintings of Persian life in which the strong influence of Chinese on Persian art is unmistakably apparent.

This Chinese influence runs like a thread through almost all forms of Persian art, other than architecture, most notably from the time of the first Mongol invasion by Genghis Khan down to the present day, being most pronounced in pottery and painting. *Chinese influence on Persia must have made itself felt, at least intermittently, however, long before the time of Genghis Khan, there being record of the establishment of direct relations between the two countries as early as the second century B. C., and again in the fifth and sixth centuries after Christ. Moreover, the Caliph Haroun-al-Rashid (786-809), who ruled Persia from Baghdad, is known to have sent an embassy to China, while there is likewise record of the bringing to Persia by Shah Abbas of Chinese workers in ceramics who made the influence of China particularly felt both then and since on the ceramic art of Persia.*

The great catholicity of Shah Abbas is further attested by the life-size paintings in the throne room into which the veranda of the Chehel Situn leads, where three immense oil paintings in the Italian style depict the life of his court or of his predecessors, to which three paintings in a similar style have been added by his successors. The best description of these six notable scenes from the historical pageant of Persia is contained in Curzon's extensive work on Persia from which the following has been abstracted:

On the wall facing the entrance are three of the six panels. One of these represents Shah Ismail engaged in combat with the Janissaries of Sultan Soliman. The redoubtable Shah



is slicing the Agha of the Janissaries in twain, a red streak marking the downward passage of the royal blade. Adjoining is the picture of Shah Tahmasp entertaining the refugee Indian prince, Humaiun, at a banquet in 1543. The two kings are kneeling upon a dais; around are disposed the singers and orchestra, the bodyguard and royal falconers with the birds perched on their wrists; while in the foreground two dancing-girls are performing with gestures none too prudish. The figures are not far short of life-size. The third picture on the eastern wall depicts a scene of even more advanced conviviality, the central figures of which are Abbas the Great and Abdul Mohammed, Khan of the Uzbeks. There is the same background of royal attendants; but the carouse has evidently made considerable progress; for the king is holding out his cup for more wine, while an inebriated guest is lying in a state of extreme intoxication on the floor, with a flask pressed to his lips. . . . On the near wall are three corresponding panels. In one of these Shah Ismail at the head of the cavalry is engaged in conflict with the Uzbek Tartars. In the second Shah Abbas II is entertaining Khalif Sultan, ambassador from the Great Mogul, with the usual accompaniment of musicians and dancing girls, the latter performing with tambourines and castanets. The last picture represents the battle between Nadir Shah and Sultan Mahmud (mounted on a white elephant) that decided the fate of Delhi.

Leaving the Chehel Situn from the garden gate to the north and turning left and proceeding a short distance to the west, one reaches the great Avenue of Chehar Bagh, or Four Gardens, once one of the stateliest avenues in the world but now preserving scarcely a vestige of its former magnificence. Extending from north to south with four rows of chinar trees, the avenue has preserved, nevertheless, a faint remembrance of its old distinction in the spacious pathway extending down its center flanked on either side by roadways. Olearius, who visited Ispahan in 1637 in the train of the Embassy from the Duke of Holstein, considered the Chehar Bagh one of the "noblest" avenues in all the world. In his time the River Zende Rud bisected the avenue which extended to an equal length on either side of that river.

Along both sides of the avenue were then beautiful pavilions leading into adjacent gardens bearing the mellifluous names of the Throne, the Nightingale, the Dervishes and the Vines, while miniature cascades of water fell from one terrace to another on the gentle declivity along the slopes of which the avenue extended. Today, the only building of any consequence to be found along the avenue is the Medrassah-i-Shah Hussein, a comparatively modern structure dating as it does from 1710.

Designed as a school and place of abode for Moslem religious teachers or mullahs, with a hundred and sixty cells for their occupancy, the Medrassah is considered one of the finest examples of Islamic architecture in Persia with its richly ornamented silver doors and tiles and panels of enameled arabesque work.

Farther down the avenue the River of the Zendeh Rud is at length reached. Over this river, by which access to Ispahan is gained by the main highway from Shiraz, is the world renowned Pul-i-Allah-Verdi-Khan, or Bridge of Allah Verdi Khan, the name of which is derived from that of the commander of Shah Abbas under whose direction it was constructed. Extending for almost four hundred yards the bridge, like the Khaju Bridge farther down the river, is really an arched dam serving the double purpose of damming the waters for irrigation and as a means of communication. On either side of the central paved roadway, thirty feet in width, are covered arcades for foot passengers communicating with the main artery by frequent arches and opening by similar arches, over ninety in number, onto the river.

Passage across the bridge on foot may also be had below the road level under arches cut through the center. There are, too, footpaths built over the union of the side arches of the lanes paralleling the main roadway, forming a third means of communication for pedestrians. In the first instance access is gained to the lower level by staircases cut at intervals in the main piers, while access is had by similar spiral stairways cut in the round towers of the corners of the bridge to the footpaths above the main and central way of communication.

Although the Bridge of Allah Verdi Khan is but one of a

number of bridges spanning the Zendeh Rud at Ispahan, only the Allah Verdi Khan and the Khaju Bridges are worthy of detailed attention.

The Khaju Bridge lies only a few hundred yards below the Allah Verdi Khan, being reached by means of an extension of the Avenue of Chehar Bagh along the south or left bank of the Zendeh Rud. This extension was also a great avenue in the time of Shah Abbas, passing as it did before resplendent palaces and leading to a royal park and game preserve where the Shah from time to time hunted wild asses. But nothing of its vanished splendor remains and only a more than usual profusion of trees along the river bank reveals any unusual character as having once attached to the site.

Of the Khaju Bridge it suffices to state that it has much the character of its renowned companion, possessing, however, a length of perhaps one-third the other. The distinguishing features of the recurrent arch and the triple levels of passage find themselves repeated in this second bridge of the Sefavid dynasty. The principal differences between the Khaju and the Allah Verdi Khan are the hexagonal towers at the ends and in the center of the former and in the stone terrace leading down from the lower level of the Khaju Bridge to the water's edge. Of both bridges it may be confidently said that neither has its like in the world.

A characteristic of the Allah Verdi Khan bridge not shared by its neighbor is the presence within the main galleries, along the principal thoroughfare of the bridge, of closed chambers. Two of these on the upper side in the center, as Curzon notes, were equally adorned "by not too proper paintings, of the time of Abbas II." An effort has recently been made to restore these paintings which, whatever their defacement and discoloration, bear still clear evidence of their manifest impropriety.

From an unknown period, however, Persia, particularly during the late Sefavid period of the seventeenth century and during the reign of the Kajars, was notorious for its erotic art. Le Brun, the Dutch traveler, recorded in 1704 that the Persians "have some books, indeed, that abound with immodest pictures," adding

that the ladies of the seraglio were extremely fond of such. He recounts that in Ispahan he was shown "one of these luscious posture-books" but found the drawings "very heavy, and artless" without anything to recommend them other than their obscenity. The bazaars of the country in the larger cities still offer playing cards, particularly of the period of Nasr-ed-Din Shah, displaying a very coarse erotic art, while Persian miniatures of the last century, in the same category, are not infrequently offered on the market from the homes of the more lecherous old grandees.

Returning along the river bank to the Allah Verdi Khan Bridge and crossing to the opposite shore, the way leads to Julfa, a suburb of Ispahan, to which, until a few years ago, the residence of all Christians in Ispahan was restricted. Its present Armenian population represents the descendants of Armenian colonists brought by Shah Abbas in 1604 from the town of Julfa on the present northwestern border of Persia and the Soviet Union. Today the principal attractions of Julfa on the Zendeh Rud, with its narrow streets or paths separating the high-walled enclosures of the homes of the inhabitants, are the more than ordinarily beautiful young Armenian women, who, happily in contradistinction to their Moslem neighbors, are unaccustomed to wear veils, and the Armenian cathedral built in the time of Shah Abbas, of which the one may be reserved for those interested in the living present and the other for those interested in the dead past.

The cathedral, with an interesting museum adjoining it, contains some striking, if somewhat grotesque, paintings of Biblical scenes. The tortures of the damned are depicted with particularly life-like fidelity, including boiling in oil and the use of the rack, as well as the thumb-screw, which may well have been drawn from the life of the times. In illustration of the "beam and the mote" motive, a figure is shown with a beam of wood in the eye of several inches in thickness engaged in extracting a mote of much reduced proportions from the eye of a companion. It has been suggested by a recent traveler that replicas of this latter painting might well serve a useful purpose today "if placed in a



convenient position wherever bodies of men hold converse or discuss matters of state." On the other hand, having consideration for the absence generally of rational processes of thought from the daily concerns of man, the efficacy of any appeal to his intelligence would appear to be of doubtful value.

Of the Julfa Armenian, for all the missionary energy expended upon him not alone by his own countrymen but also by that of the Church of England Mission stationed for many years in Ispahan, Doctor Wills, who resided for many years in their midst, has written that drunkenness was so common among them that his Armenian cook would say to him on Sunday night: "Dinner finished, sir; if you no orders, I go get drunk with my priest."

Perhaps if the good Doctor Wills did but know it there was more method than madness in the occasional drunken proclivities of the Armenians. Until man has ceased to condone war, to deify waste, and to murder unceasingly by day and by night his fellow men in the application of the present economic system, it may well be that the most sensible release from the stupidities of the yahoos who now administer the world is to be found in drink, at least once a week, in order that life may be made endurable for the other six days.

Of other places of interest in Ispahan there remain to be noted the Mesjid-i-Jameh, or Friday Mosque, whose foundations are said to have been laid in 755 A. D., a century after the Arab conquest of Persia, and successively added to or restored by the Sefavids. Other noteworthy mosques include the Mesjid-i-Ali constructed by Sultan Sanjar in 1121, and the Sha'ia Mosque, which was restored by the Seljuk, Sultan Alp Arslan, in 1111.

That so much is known of the court of Shah Abbas and of the regal magnificence of his times is due largely to the hospitable reception which that notable monarch and his successors of the Sefavid dynasty offered foreign travelers who were attracted to Persia, and to the observant members of the embassies deputed to Persia at that period who have left extended accounts of their visits.

Among these are to be numbered the Sherley brothers, Sir

Robert and Sir Anthony, who first visited Persia in 1599, the former of whom was sent by the Shah as his own ambassador to Spain and to England. In 1618 Don Garcías de Silva made his appearance at the court of Shah Abbas as the envoy of Philip III of Spain, while in 1627 the second British Ambassador to Persia, Sir Dodmore Cotton, reached Ispahan in the company of Sir Robert Sherley. Sir Thomas Herbert, his secretary, has left in his *Travels* one of the most fascinating accounts of Persian life and customs under the Sefavid dynasty. There came also to Ispahan in the same century on one mission or another, Pietro della Valle, Chardin, Tavernier, Father Raphael du Mans, Thévenot, Sanson, Fryer and Daulier-Deslandes.

This by no means exhausts the list of famous envoys and travelers who, with the spread of the fame of Persia abroad, beginning particularly in the sixteenth century, came in ever-increasing numbers to admire and wonder and to leave records of remarkable fullness of their journeys and observations.

The sixteenth and seventeenth centuries were, it is true, pre-eminently an age of exploration, and notable for the extension of mankind's knowledge of the nature of the earth and of its inhabitants, a curiosity quickened by the discoveries of the great Genoese, the Portuguese and the Spanish. Due to the tolerance and large-mindedness of Shah Abbas this curiosity bore full fruit for those who found their way to Persia.

An extensive and delightful bird's-eye view of Ispahan is to be had from the slopes of the Kuh-i-Suffa only a few kilometers outside the city on the road leading to Shiraz. The lower reaches of the mountain may be gained by automobile, followed by a brief climb to the commanding height of a mound, from which the whole of Ispahan may be viewed extended in the form of a great oasis in a vast desert plain broken here and there by brownstone mountain ridges.

The great *meidan*, flanked by the Ali Kapu and the flashing resplendent domes of the mosques and their proud minarets, the graceful bridges spanning the Zendeh Rud and the scattered groups of *imamzadehs* in the right foreground, the once stately

Avenue of the Chehar Bagh and the still verdant confines of the many gardens dotting the city—all reflect, however faintly, the former glories of this unique Persian city.

The romance of its past no less than the all too few vestiges which remain of its incomparable beauty and elegance well entitle it to a rank beside its sister cities of the Middle East: Cairo, Damascus, Jerusalem, Baghdad, Bokhara and Samarcand. With these, equally redolent at one time or another of matchless beauty and Eastern magnificence, however tarnished some of their glory may be today by the hand of time or the vandalism of man, Ispahan may proudly and confidently take its place. If it is not still half the world it is yet half and more of Persia.

## CHAPTER IV

### THE DESERT CITIES OF KERMAN AND YEZD

#### *1. The Particular Interest of Those Cities*

THE cities of Kerman and Yezd, lying far removed from the main travel routes, possess a special interest by reason of their particular geographic situation, the character of their inhabitants and, to a certain extent, their general features, not shared by any other habited centers of the country.

Like all populated localities on the plateau, both cities lie closely encompassed by high mountain ranges from the slopes of which their water supplies are largely derived. Situated as both are on the edges of the vast salt desert which extends over the greater part of eastern Persia—Yezd almost in the geographic center of the country and Kerman in the southeast—they owe their development to the convergence upon them of century-old caravan routes leading from Turkestan in central Asia to the Persian Gulf and from the west of Persia to India.

Until only a century or more ago communications between Europe and the East were subject to such constantly changing factors as to make impossible reliance upon continued and uninterrupted travel by a single route. There has only to be recalled in this connection the part played by the fall of Constantinople to the Turks in the fifteenth century with the necessity imposed in consequence upon Europe to seek a new westward route to the Indies as an alternative to the ancient overland route through Turkey to the East. Even earlier when the more convenient route by sea eastward was open, the presence of pirates in the Persian Gulf and the Red Sea, or the unseaworthy character of the vessels then available, more frequently than not impelled European travelers to choose the overland route through Persia or Russia to India and China.



Thus, one of the earliest European travelers to pass through Persia in the Middle Ages, the great Marco Polo, chose to traverse Persia in the thirteenth century from north to south by way of Yezd and Kerman to seek at Hormuz on the Persian Gulf passage to China. And even once arrived there, the vessels available to bear him on his way, described by him as "wretched affairs," were apparently such as to persuade him to turn north and to follow the long and toilsome way overland to China in recrossing Persia and thence proceeding through Turkestan to his destination.

From Kerman ancient caravan routes lead south to Bandar Abbas on the Persian Gulf, east to the Baluchistan frontier toward India, north to Birjand toward Turkestan, and west to Shiraz and to Yezd. From Yezd similar caravan routes penetrate into the very heart of the forbidding Lut or salt desert north-eastward to Meshed and Bokhara by way of Tabas, southwestward to Abadeh on the Shiraz-Ispahan highway and northwestward to Ispahan and Teheran. Of these old caravan routes only the roads from Bandar Abbas to Kerman, Kerman to Yezd, and from Yezd to Ispahan and Teheran have been transformed into fairly passable motor roads. The remainder await their conversion from at present virtually impassable sand tracks into a firmer surface which will readily link Teheran by the most direct overland route to Baluchistan and India. Adventuresome travelers have succeeded in traversing, with infinite difficulty, the sandy and lonely wastes separating Kerman from Zahedan on the southeastern Persian frontier with British Baluchistan (whence railway communication with India may be had from Mirjawa, eighty-six kilometers east of Zahedan), but only occasionally and with great pains and with risks no less great.

More usually, however, modern travelers by motor, en route to and from India, choose the longer but more practical route from Teheran to Meshed and thence south along the Afghan and Baluchistan frontiers to Zahedan. The road from Zahedan to Mirjawa on the Perso-Indian frontier is bad but not worse than that from Mirjawa to Quetta, which motorists prefer wisely to avoid gen-

erally by making use of the railway connecting those two towns of British Baluchistan.

Subject to fewer difficulties is the old caravan route between Yezd and Meshed by way of Tabas, a distance of close to six hundred miles, which is being opened to motor traffic. Here the principal difficulties are the absence of readily available supplies of water and gasoline and the possibility of a breakdown in some remote locality of the desert. Much the same difficulties, though to a less degree, are present in traversing by motor the direct route from Kerman to Shiraz but in another year or more this old caravan trail will no doubt be converted, as most of the great caravan routes of Persia these last years, into a road suitable for all forms of motor traffic.

The very remoteness of Kerman and Yezd made those cities ideally suited in the seventh century, with the conquest of Persia by the Arabs and the adoption of Islam, as places of refuge for those Persian adherents of the old Zoroastrian faith who sought to maintain their ancient religion. To Kerman and Yezd they made their way from all over Persia and there they have preserved through all the intervening centuries the ancient indigenous worship of their remote forebears, one of the oldest religions of the world. As their persecution extended even to Yezd and Kerman, many made their way to India and there came to form in time in Bombay the prosperous community of the Parsees or Farsees, meaning people of Fars, the province by whose name all the people of Persia were known after the time of Cyrus. Today only a few thousand are left in Yezd and Kerman and in the environs of those cities. The numbers are likely to be further depleted rather than increased owing to the fact that, in striking contradistinction to other religions of the world, converts are not accepted by the Zoroastrians, those included in the Zoroastrian community being rigidly limited to such as are born in the faith. Some of the younger and more progressive elements belonging to the religion of Zoroaster have sought in recent years to obtain sanction for the admittance to their worship of their non-Zoroastrian wives but they have been no more

successful in obtaining this slight concession than in the larger one which has been proposed of opening their ranks to those Moslem and Christian Persians who may desire to revert to the faith of their fathers. Yet there are not lacking Persians who believe that the time may come when the State itself may undertake, as a part of the widespread movement looking to the restoration of Persian culture and of the Persian national spirit, to substitute for the present national religion, the Shi'ite sect of Islam, the Zoroastrian faith, the religion of Persia under the two most glorious of its epochs.

## 2. *In the Footsteps of Marco Polo*

Persia has been pertinently described as a vast desert, with the exception of the northern fringe along the Caspian and a portion of the southern coast along the Gulf, relieved only here and there over the vast barren plateau by natural and artificially developed oases. The former, the fewer in number, have been formed from the rare perennial streams of water, fed usually by the melting snows of the mountains and, accordingly, bountiful only in the spring and subsiding to thin trickles in the summer. The greater part of the scattered and infrequent towns and villages of the country, however, are dependent for their indispensable water supplies upon artificial means of irrigation by *kanats*. Wells are dug at intervals along a gentle slope and the water conducted through underground channels connecting the wells, the water being thus preserved underground from excessive evaporation in the heat of the summer and not emerging from the *kanats* until it reaches the town or village where it is distributed in a network of small open canals.

In rainless Egypt the inhabitants are dependent for their sole source of water upon the Nile which is fed thousands of miles away by the rains from the highlands of Abyssinia and the torrential rainfalls accumulated in the lakes of equatorial Africa. Highland Persia, on the other hand, where no rain falls from the late spring to the late autumn, and where such rivers as exist



usually lose themselves in the deserts, is almost solely dependent upon the utilization of the precious moisture accumulated and retained in the form of snow on the high mountain ranges which cover the country. But for its mountains, accordingly, Persia might be as barren and desolate as the Sahara or Arabia.

It has been observed of travel in Persia that, so far as concerns the great central plateau, one always travels in a plain, while having mountains of varying magnitudes on either hand. The great passes which are so formidable to the traveler entering Iran are confined to those incident to entry upon or descent from the great central plateau region, differences of several thousand feet in the altitudes of localities on the plateau being more often than not imperceptible.

Probably no journey in Persia is better illustrative of these general conditions than that from Teheran to Yezd and Kerman. From Teheran to Kum, a distance of some ninety miles, the road is identical with that leading to Mohammerah and to Ispahan and Shiraz. It is true that a considerable number of saddlebacks of mountain ridges must be crossed but, aside from these, and from the presence of a fairly extensive salt lake representing the farthest westward extension of the great eastern salt desert, the road is similar in nearly all respects to a hundred like stretches in Persia.

There are the same, if perhaps more frequently recurring, villages of sun-dried brick, the same battered caravanserais, the same caravans of camels and of donkeys, usually bearing loads of twigs of the shrub yielding tragacanth gum, used as a fuel in Persia where trees are conspicuous by their rarity.

To Shah Abbas the Great is credited the greater portion of the innumerable caravanserais extending at intervals along all Persian roads which follow ancient caravan trails. Caravanserais, in one form or another were instituted by Cyrus but of these no trace remains. Of the caravanserais of a less remote past only those built by the Mongols and by Shah Abbas and the Sefavid kings survive in any number. These buildings, with towers at the four sides and of high walls, are always, in however sad a state of dilapidation they may have fallen, one of the most distinctive



and picturesque features of the landscape. Constructed at intervals of the average distance traveled by camel caravans in a day, the caravanserai, comprising one or two stories, lies more often than not isolated on the road in the midst of a desert plain like a medieval European fortress which it so much resembles from afar. Within is an open court surrounded by stables for the animals and rooms for members of the caravan. If adjacent to a village, there is always near by a tea house or *chai-khaneh* where tea, bread, eggs, sour milk, and perhaps chicken or grilled mutton with rice may be had by the wayfarer. But if they are remote from a habitated settlement, as they usually are, there are nothing but bare walls without either food or drink to relieve the wants of a traveler. Doctor Fryer, an English seventeenth-century traveler in Persia, has left a description of these caravanserais which is as apt today as it was two hundred and fifty years ago. Thus:

Coming to our Inns, we have no Host, or Young Damosels to bide us Welcome, nor other Furniture than Bare Walls; no Rooms Swept, nor Cleanly Entertainment, Tables neatly Spread, or Maidens to Attend with Voice or Lute to Exhilarate the Weary Passenger; but instead of these, Apartments covered with Dung and Filth; Musick indeed there is of Humming Gnats pricking us to keep an unwilling Measure to their Comfort: So that here is neither Provision for Man or Beast, only an open House.

If the road from Teheran to Yezd and Kerman resembles in so many respects one of a hundred like roads in Persia, it differs in one important respect from such main traveled routes as that from Teheran to Ispahan or that from Teheran to Baghdad in the complete absence of any hotel along the way and in the complete dependence of the traveler upon the caravanserai, garage and tea house for a lodging. For few are the European travelers who have ventured to proceed to places so isolated and distant as Yezd and Kerman. In recent times the most common have been buyers of rugs and the few English missionaries stationed in those towns since the last century, together with British representatives of the Imperial Bank of Persia.

From the time of the Greeks and Romans until the journey thither of Marco Polo in 1271 no records are extant of Kerman and Yezd having been visited by a European. There are testimonies of the travel to Persia a century before of Rabbi Benjamin of Tudela and, a few years previous to the journey across Persia of Marco Polo, of Friar William de Rubruquis, but they do not appear to have ventured so far afield as either Yezd or Kerman. Friar Odoric followed Marco Polo in Yezd, and Tavernier, the French jeweler, who visited Persia on a number of occasions in the seventeenth century, has left a record of his stay in both towns. In more recent years, travelers who have left the most instructive accounts of these desert cities have been the Persian scholars, Professor A. V. W. Jackson of New York, Professor Browne, of Cambridge, and General Sir Percy Sykes.

The last-named possesses the distinction of having first correctly identified the route of Marco Polo across Persia and he has likewise remarked upon the curious and interesting fact that the three great geographers of early days, namely, Herodotus, of the fifth century B. C., Chang Kien, of the second century B. C., and Marco Polo, of the thirteenth century A. D., all alike shared the distinction of having set foot in ancient Iran.

Marco Polo entered Persia only a few years subsequent to the unparalleled havoc and devastation wrought throughout the Middle East by the Mongolian conqueror, Genghis Khan. Evidence of this destruction was still before Marco Polo's eyes when he wrote that "Persia is a great country, which was in old times very illustrious and powerful; but now the Tartars have wasted and destroyed it."

But, as has been observed, once the Tartar conquests were consolidated and Persia subjugated, the Mongolian overlords of the country, who ruled Persia from the thirteenth to the fourteenth centuries, underwent a spiritual transformation. Inspired by the development of the great cultural influences which enjoyed an important impetus under the Mongols in the security which followed their conquests, Persia passed in turn, in common with other territories of the Mongolian Empire, through a great

artistic rejuvenation which has left an indelible impression upon Persian art and architecture.

The welcome given Marco Polo at the Court of the Great Khan in China at the end of the thirteenth century was an earnest of the cosmopolitanism which distinguished the Mongol Empire in its mature years. Travelers enjoyed a favor, and a receptiveness and inquiring spirit toward the cultures of other lands was shown, such as only distinguished one other subsequent period in Persian history, that of Shah Abbas in the seventeenth century.

Marco Polo, notwithstanding the unexampled ferocity exhibited by the Mongols but a few years previous, found no difficulty in traversing the great expanse of the Mongolian Empire which extended in his time from the Caspian to the Yellow Sea. Entering Persia at Tabriz in the northwest corner of the country he passed thence, probably by way of Kazvin, to Saba, now Saveh, and thence, presumably, through Kum to Kashan and on to Yezd and Kerman.

At Kum, accordingly, the juncture of roads to Ispahan, Mohammerah, Kazvin, Yezd and Teheran, there is taken up, in coming from Teheran, the route of Marco Polo.

Leaving the Mohammerah road a little distance outside of Kum and traversing a river bed over an ancient stone bridge offering passage for only a single car, the road to Kashan turns to the left and skirts for many miles the base of the brown-stoned barren mountain range extending approximately from east to west. Villages or other signs of human habitation are rare; for the region represents the southwestern edge of the Great Salt Desert along whose fringe the way continues as far as Kerman.

This desert, as determined by Sven Hedin, represents, in fact, an underground sea. Beneath the thin surface of earth lies a great morass in which in wet weather caravans have been engulfed as in quicksand. For these many centuries water has converged upon this great natural depression and has converted all but a few firm patches of sand and a thin surface extending over the rest into such a quagmire that it is death to traverse it in any but

dry weather. In these respects it is one of the unique deserts of the world.

### 3. *Kashan*

Kashan, some sixty miles from Kum, is noted for its carpets, its scorpions and the timorousness of its inhabitants. It was renowned also for its porcelain in the golden days of Shah Abbas. So much so that the type of porcelain for which Kashan and other towns were distinguished, acquired in Persia the generic name of "Kashi," a designation which such porcelain retains to this day. Of its modern carpets it is said that those of Kashan represent the finest weave in Persia, those of Kerman enjoying pre-eminence for their colors. The renown of its scorpions is attested by the common Persian curse, "May you be stung by a scorpion of Kashan."

Modern Persians have often suffered reflections upon their prowess in arms, the remark of a Persian that his countrymen would be the greatest fighters in the world if, in war, there were no question of death involved, often being cited as representative of a more than individual sentiment. It would hardly seem fair or even warranted, however, to accept such a remark, more probably than not uttered in jest, as characteristic of the martial spirit of the Persians which has been displayed to advantage on more than one occasion in history, ancient and modern.

Nevertheless, an instance of the lack of valor of the inhabitants of Kashan is cited by Sir John Malcolm of a character to constitute a formidable indictment of the Kashanese. According to that writer, when Nadir Shah returned from India he published a proclamation, permitting the followers of his army to return to their homes. It is narrated that thirty thousand of those from Kashan and Ispahan applied to Nadir Shah for a guard of a hundred men to escort them safely on their way. The conqueror of India is represented as exclaiming in his fury his regret that he was not again a robber in order that he might waylay and plunder such craven cowards, observing, moreover, that his success in India would appear in the nature of a miracle considering that a



set of dastards had formed an important complement of his army.

Whatever the valorous characteristics of the Kashanese may be there can be no criticism made of their gracious hospitality. Upon arriving at Kashan, the authorities were kind enough, in the absence of hotel accommodations, to offer us lodging in a private house. We preferred, however, to test the comfort of the caravanserai, half in ruins, overlooking the town square. Cots from our automobiles were assembled in rooms on the second floor and a dinner of *chilau kabab* with tea and brown Persian bread, sour milk and oranges, was provided from a neighboring kitchen. Our recompense for any discomforts suffered was had in full measure the following morning with the sight of the glorious colors cast against the neighboring brown-stone cliffs by the rising sun which, for a few fleeting moments, bathed the tawdry drab buildings of sun-dried brick which constitute the city of Kashan, with something of the romantic indefinable flush of the East. Descending below and surveying the tumble-down caravanserai from the ground there rushed into memory that quatrain of Khayyam:

Think, in this *batter'd* Caravanserai  
Whose portals are alternate Night and Day,  
How Sultan after Sultan with his Pomp  
Abode his Hour or two, and went his way.

One cannot taste the full flavor or measure the telling appositeness of Omar Khayyam's reflections without an intimate acquaintance with Persia, where his poetry illuminates the scene as no other single interpreter for English-speaking travelers, notwithstanding the passage of the centuries since his death.

Although I was not aware of it at the time, we had stumbled upon the great caravanserai, of which there is an illustration in the *Travels* of Chardin published in London in 1686, built by Shah Abbas the Great, which Chardin calls the "fairest not only in Cashan, but in all Persia," and of which he has left an elaborate description. It was minutely described also by Le Brun in

1704 when it was "principally frequented by the natives of India." As early as 1637 Olearius, in the Embassy of the Duke of Holstein, had remarked likewise upon this caravanserai which doubtless led him to comment upon the city as "one of the most populous and most eminent for Trading of any in Persia, and the best Built of any we were yet come to, whether in regard to its private houses, or its Palaces and Caravanserai." He added that "there is in this City, at all times, a great number of foreign Merchants, and above all, Indians." A photograph taken of the capitals of the colonnade forming part of the under-structure of the caravanserai reveals unmistakable Indian influence in the architecture of the edifice. These interesting circumstances constitute further evidence of the catholicity of that remarkable monarch, Shah Abbas, to whose Kingdom workers in pottery were brought from distant China and to whose court ambassadors were sent by most of the great crowned heads of Europe.

#### 4. *Natanz and Nain*

Some thirty-six miles from Kashan the road begins a gradual ascent which leads to the plateau and thence to the verdant pleasant valley in which Natanz, one of the most graceful and charming villages of Persia, is situated. Its profusion of fruit trees, nourished by artificial water channels from the neighboring hills, the blue-tiled dome of a Moslem shrine, and the abundance of verdure, so striking in contrast with the barren expanses left behind, make of Natanz a sheer delight to the senses.

That its pleasant aspect has long characterized it is evident from the fact that it was a favorite summer resort of the Sefavid dynasty. The great Shah Abbas himself maintained here "a pretty little palace, with gardens, fountains of fine water and cascades" (Bell in 1717), as well as a hunting lodge which still stands in the immediate neighborhood at Abbassabad. In Natanz also there may be seen the remains of a once magnificent mosque, that of the Mesjid-i-Jameh built in 1315, from which, according to Sykes, some of the finest lustered tiles of Persia have been taken for the

South Kensington Museum. Here also is the tomb of Sheikh Abdul Samad dating from the same period, as well as a still older Seljukian Mihrab of the Mosque Kirce Mir, while the remains of a Sassanian monument in the vicinity reveal the high antiquity of the locality.

We stopped at a *chai-khaneh* by the roadside just short of the town for a lunch of tea, fried eggs and Persian bread. Opposite was an interesting example of the flour mills peculiar to Persia where reliance for waterpower must be placed largely upon the underground artificial water channels rather than, as in other countries, upon open natural streams. At a depth of some twenty feet, reached by an inclined passageway, were two great circular stones, placed one above the other, between which wheat flour is ground by the revolving action of one of the stones propelled by the force of the stream of water underneath acting upon a paddle wheel.

Ten miles beyond Natanz a fork in the road was reached, the right leading to Ispahan and the left to Nain and Yezd. The highway to Yezd swings north, passing west of Abbassabad and descends from the plateau on which Natanz is situated by a gravel-strewn barren valley to the plain left behind in making the ascent to Natanz. As far as the eye can reach the scene presents a vast barren landscape unbroken by any vegetation other than the short scrubby desert plant from which camels find some sustenance. Villages become even less frequent than on the road between Kashan and Natanz, Ardestan, some forty miles from Natanz being the first encountered, followed by two smaller hamlets at intervals of fifteen and twenty-three miles. Northeast of Ardestan are old Sassanian ruins, the town itself containing a Seljukian mosque, the Mesjid-i-Jameh, in a particularly fine state of preservation dating from 1158 A. D. Beyond lies Nain some fifty-six miles distant or not quite one hundred miles from Natanz.

Nain, where particularly clean rooms for the night were found in a garage at the entrance to the town, is distinguished in its general aspect by the prevalence of peculiar wind towers and

*abambars*, or reservoirs, which, from Kashan to Kerman, constitute the most striking features of the skylines of all towns and villages along that route. The wind towers consist of four-sided structures pierced at their tops with parallel apertures, much like those of a pipe organ, to admit in summer currents of air which are carried below to cool the stifling atmosphere of the interiors. The *abambars* are conical-shaped brick or stone structures erected over reservoirs of water for the purpose of keeping the water in such reservoirs as cool as possible during the trying heat of the summer.

In contradistinction to other Persian towns Nain possesses an air of neatness which would seem to be due less to any scrupulous regard on the part of the inhabitants for cleanliness than to the action of the wind in sweeping the town clean at frequent intervals.

In the seventeenth century and previously Nain was noted for the production of exquisite white semi-porcelain work, the purest examples of porcelain ware ever developed in Persia. However, like other artistic achievements of the past, that which once distinguished Nain has long since been lost, the modern pottery now produced in the town being crude and altogether common. Perhaps some specimens of the old semi-porcelain work of the town may still remain in the possession of its inhabitants but my inquiries failed to bring any to light.

Nain contains other objects of interest in the ancient ark or citadel, surmounting a small hill in the center of the town, now crumbling into ruins; in the walls and gate towers which circumscribe the locality; and in the more modern blue-tiled dome over the tomb of a dervish enclosed within a pleasant and extensive walled garden on the roadside skirting the town. In the Friday Mosque dating from the tenth century of our era Nain possesses one of the most ancient mosques of Persia remaining virtually intact. On the whole there are few more picturesque towns or villages in Persia than this conglomeration of crumbling ruins, of *abambars* and wind towers interlaced by the typical narrow lanes giving ingress and egress to the inhabitants.



Nor is there any more cheerful stretch of road between Teheran and Kerman than that between Nain and Yezd, a distance of a little more than one hundred miles. Villages with a surprising air of fertility in the midst of the desert surrounding them intervene with greater frequency, the first at a distance of only some twelve miles from Nain, followed by a caravanserai some twenty-four miles farther, and ten miles beyond the presence of isolated date palms heralds the approach of the interesting walled village of Akda. A great caravan of camels was resting in the shadow of its walls as we passed for, in general, the drivers of camel caravans prefer to rest during the day and to travel in the cool of the evenings and early mornings.

Thirteen miles beyond Akda is a police post and caravanserai from which a new road to Yezd, built in 1934, somewhat longer than the old, leads through a series of fertile strips, comprising the walled village of Ardekan and the hamlet of Hajjiabad, into Yezd. But Yezd was not reached before a great sandstorm, frequent in these localities in the spring, had almost obscured our way and had made impossible a view of the mountains, lying in their solemn if barren grandeur at a little distance on the north and south sides of the city.

### 5. *The Good and Noble City of Yezd*

Marco Polo described Yezd as a "good and noble city" and as having a great amount of trade. "They weave there," he wrote, "quantities of a certain silk tissue known as Yasdi (Yezdi) which merchants carry into many quarters to dispose of."

The same silk tissue which he noted as the principal handiwork of the city is still produced in large quantities and continues to enjoy a great repute throughout Persia, being woven on hand-looms housed in underground basements throughout the city.

If the customs of the inhabitants of Yezd have varied little since the days of Marco Polo, it may be presumed, from the large numbers of women to be seen on donkeys issuing from the town as we entered it, that they have changed even less since the

visit in 1881 of the English traveler, Stack. That visitor, upon remarking the large exodus of women from the town, was informed that they were wives who complained each spring of a mysterious ailment only cured by a diet of mulberries. According to Stack's informant at such a time they say to their husbands:

"My dear, I know I shall never be better till I have gone into the country to eat mulberries. In such and such a village my mother's sister-in-law's son owns a garden, and I am sure he will put me up for a few days;" and the man is not her mother's sister-in-law's son at all, but some young fellow she knows. So the husband consents, and at the end of a few weeks his wife comes back to him, looking fresh and cheerful, having recovered her good looks, which she was afraid of losing.

And Stack adds of his guide that "the old rascal grinned wickedly as he looked at the veiled figures riding back."

As we drove into Yezd, meeting so many veiled women coming out of the town, I thought of the mulberries whose leaves sustain the busy silk cocoons which provide the raw material for Yezd's chief industry while the berries promote so well the health and beauty of the wives of the city's workers who resort to them. And I wondered what was serving as a substitute for mulberries in cities other than Yezd. The story may be apocryphal but it is worthy of a place in an account of scenes from one of the homes of the Arabian Nights.

Yezd, which is situated at an elevation of four thousand and seventy-five feet and has a population of some forty thousand, was known to the ancients as *Isatichai*, being thus denominated in Ptolemy's geography as among the few towns of the desert of Carmania. It is said to have been used by Alexander the Great as a safe retreat for the confinement of his prisoners of war. The modern name of the city is commonly derived from the Sassanian King, Yezdigird I (399-420 A. D.), who presumably restored it.

None of its distinctive edifices, however, dates from a period earlier than the twelfth century. The most striking of its surviving buildings are the Friday Mosque and the façade of the en-

trance to the bazaars. The former was built in 1119, while the latter, which is flanked by two conspicuously tall minarets, would appear to be of a much later date.

The minarets of the mosque which it adjoins, situated within the center of the city, rise to an even higher height than those marking the entrance to the bazaars and are probably the highest and the most distinctive in all of Persia. The interior of the mosque, to which we were permitted admittance without difficulty, is distinguished not so much by its architecture as by the exceptionally beautiful tile work of the dome and of the walls of the room upon which it rests.

The fort within the city, built of sun-dried and mud bricks, and now in a state of disintegration, was reconstructed in 1137 and possesses no unusual interest. Close by it there once stood a collection of buildings known as the Vukt-i-Saat, of which only a dome remains, consisting originally of a college, a library and a remarkable observatory, erected in 1325.

Within the last three or four years, with the municipal improvements which are being made, including the cutting of wide avenues through the city, Yezd is taking on a renovated air which is rapidly relieving it of that aspect of untroubled calm which it presented for many centuries. An echo of the unchanged centuries, however, may be heard in the evenings from the veranda of the tea house, serving as a lodging, overlooking the broad new main avenue bisecting the city. Amid the cries from the muezzins calling the faithful to prayer there sound the pleasantly harmonious tinkling bells of the camel caravans wending their way into the city from the adjacent desert. For here in this remote oasis of Persia the camels bearing their burdens still make a thousand years one.

#### 6. *Kerman, Behind the Beyond*

A full appreciation of the remoteness of Kerman from the relatively populous centers of western Persia may only be gained from an actual journey there. Lying some two hundred and

forty miles across an expanse of desert country, broken by hardly more than half a dozen villages, the route thither consumed seven days' travel for Marco Polo; for us, despite a broken rear spring of my automobile, the way was made in one day.

Besides an occasional caravanserai, resting in solitary loneliness in the broad stone-strewn plain which extends in an undulating surface from the hills above Yezd to Kerman, there are only the villages of Mehriz, twenty-four miles distant from Yezd, Mazraeh Shur, eleven miles beyond, Anar, some fifty-six miles farther, Rafsanjan, another fifty-five miles, and, finally, after passing through two hamlets, Kerman, some ninety miles more. The absence of traffic is best indicated when it is remarked that on the whole extent of the way from Yezd to Kerman and from Kerman to Yezd on our return, but one automobile was encountered and no more than six or eight trucks. The only other evidence of life, apart from the isolated and uninteresting villages passed through, and occasional caravans of camels and donkeys, were vast flocks of sheep to be seen in the vicinity of the villages, and a few wild gazelles in the proximity of the few existing water holes.

Kerman, the Carmania of the Greeks, lies at an altitude of 5,680 feet close under the same brown-colored barren mountains which flank, with hardly an interruption, now near and now far, the plain joining Yezd with Kerman.

The city presents a far more ancient aspect than Yezd notwithstanding the modern appearance given to those parts of it which are being embellished by broad squares and wide avenues. Perhaps this air of antiquity attaching to Kerman is due primarily to the two strikingly prominent and impressive old forts lying astride the crest and spurs of crags which rise some hundreds of feet above the plain on which the modern city has risen. One of these forts is known as the Kala-i-Dokhtar, or Maiden's Fort, and the other as the Kala Ardeshir, the latter attributed to the Sassanian monarch of that name, the first of the Sassanian line of kings. They certainly present every appearance of a great age, the solidity of their foundations being assured in part by stone, while



their walls of great sun-dried brick have been practically unimpaired by time.

East and north of the ridges occupied by the old forts are the precincts of the ancient town, parts of the walls of which are still standing, while to the south is the quarter known as Farmitan with its innumerable deserted mud brick houses, a part of the city sacked by the Afghans in the eighteenth century and never re-inhabited.

A profusion of trees, so sadly absent generally from the landscape, gives a more than usually attractive aspect to the modern city spread out beneath the old forts and dotted everywhere with the inevitable wind towers and *abambars*. The bazaars are not so interesting as those of Yezd and the buildings situated within the modern city, which include a Friday Mosque, built in 1349, a *medrasseh*, or college, and the Kobbah-i-Sabz, or Green Cupola, erected in 1155, possess no particular interest. The modern city, like the old, is surrounded by a wall, entrance through which is gained by a series of gates.

Today, apart from its shawls, Kerman is noted chiefly for its carpets which are produced in great numbers on handlooms and are sent to the far ends of the earth. The dozen or more foreign residents of the city are almost exclusively representatives of foreign carpet companies who supervise the production of carpets according to specified designs dictated by the taste of the principal foreign markets. One of these company's warehouses was divided into partitions marked New York, Philadelphia, Toronto, London, Paris and Chicago, where the carpets are segregated according to their respective designs. Carpets of a particular pattern suited for the taste of New York, it appeared, were unacceptable to London. Those admired by New York seemed to be the worst in taste although, among the modern designs now being executed, there was but little choice.

Special designers are employed by all the carpet companies who work from patterns especially ordered from abroad or who create their own designs on the basis of the known demand. To guide these artists an extensive collection of photographs is maintained

of the most famous carpets of the world, including the precious treasures of museums.

One glance at the patterns of the old carpets was sufficient to give me a loathing for modern rugs. But when one of the foreign agents was expostulated with for not preferring the reproduction of the old designs, representing the artistic genius of Persians responsible for the development of beautiful carpets, the reply was that there was "no market" for such productions, that modern buyers disdained them. And there were shown brief typed comments from New York and London attached to photographs of designs submitted for approval, such as "general design fairly good; break the line running through the center," comments typical of the dogmatic spirit of men with minds imbued by the cash nexus.

An hour's drive by car, twenty-five miles east of Kerman, is the shrine of Mahun in the village of that name, known locally as the "paradise of Kerman." Here in the midst of an indescribably squalid collection of mud houses is one of the most beautiful examples of the architectural handiwork of man to be found in Persia or, for that matter, perhaps anywhere in the world.

The shrine consists of a series of buildings, of which the most important is a tiled dome, flanked by two imposing minarets, surmounting the tomb of the Seyyid Nur-ed-Din, to whose fame the memorial was erected. Entering through the gate of the outer wall enclosing the shrine, I passed into the midst of an enchanting garden where cypress trees have been planted to give an additional symmetry and air of quiet dignity to the buildings, and then through a series of courts about which the various buildings have been centered on a single axis.

Seyyid Nur-ed-Din was born at Aleppo in 1330, a descendant of one of the twelve Imams as well as of the Prophet. Having acquired great repute for his learning he undertook extensive travels, including the performance of unusual penances. These are said to have included eighty days spent in meditation on the summit of Mount Demavend (nineteen thousand feet) near Teheran, in mid-winter, and the living on dust at Kerbela for a

period of forty days. At Samarcand, capital of Tamerlane, the Seyyid acquired such renown that the Mongol ruler, jealous of the growing influence of his subject, persuaded him to remove to the distant isolated confines of Mahun where Tamerlane is said to have built him a place of residence which may well have been on the spot now occupied by the shrine.

The interiors of the various buildings making up the premises of this exquisite retreat offer nothing of any interest. Seated, however, on a carpet spread by the friendly dervishes of the sanctuary by the side of a pool of water fronting the tomb, and surveying the graceful vaulted recesses of the buildings surrounding the inner court, while a meal was made of the eggs and bread and dates and sour milk proffered us, I found vistas of such surpassing beauty in whatever direction my eye fell as are only rarely glimpsed either in Persia or elsewhere in this world.

It is remarkable that, considering the vicissitudes of Persian history, the Mahun shrine should have so successfully escaped the ravages of man's insensately destructive proclivities and should have been preserved unimpaired. For Kerman, despite its remoteness, has suffered equally, if not perhaps even more, severely than many other cities from the fluctuating fortunes of Persian annals. Indeed, the very remoteness of Kerman has drawn thither as a place of last refuge the defenders of most of the lost causes in Persian history who have thereby brought upon the city the visitation of the accumulated vengeance of their antagonists.

To Kerman there fled Yezdigird, last of the Sassanian line, before the conquering Arab hosts. Sacked and successively destroyed by the armies of Genghis Khan, Tamerlane, the Afghans and by Nadir Shah, the city suffered its most appalling punishment in 1794 for having offered refuge and support to Lutf Ali Khan, last of the Zand family, who had fled before the armies of the first of the Kajar dynasty, Aga Mohammed Khan, seeking to extend his authority over the whole country. Once the city had been taken by the eunuch monarch, one of the most despicable fiends in Persian history, the women were delivered over to rape by the soldiery, while the Kajar victor ordered that twenty thou-

sand pairs of eyes of the inhabitants should be presented to him. Sykes relates that Aga Mohammed himself carefully counted the eyes, remarking when the count had been completed to the officer charged with overseeing the task, "Had one pair of eyes been wanting, yours would have been taken."

### 7. *The Zoroastrians in Kerman and Yezd*

Of more particular interest than as serving as the places of refuge of fallen princes is the fact that Kerman, as well as Yezd, represent the remote centers to which there fled from all over Persia the devoted followers of Zoroaster in the seventh century in an effort to escape the proselyting zeal of the Arab followers of Mohammed and to preserve their ancient indigenous faith.

There in Kerman and Yezd, in ever dwindling numbers and despite, until recently, persistent and continued persecution, has been preserved all that is left in Persia of a worship which was the national religion of the country before the Arab invasion. In small nuclei are still represented vestiges of the ancient nature worship of the Aryans, once common to all Indo-European peoples.

Before the advent of the present Reza Shah Pahlevi, the Zoroastrians were compelled to wear distinctive garments and were subject to various disabilities. During the last ten years, however, these disabilities have been removed, and persecution of a people, who stand out as types generally of the finest physical specimens of Persian men and women, has ceased.

Today the most striking, to a foreign observer, of the Zoroastrian rites which have been preserved are those connected with the burial of the dead and the maintenance of an eternal flame of fire.

At Yezd, as well as at Kerman, somewhat remote from the towns, are *dakhmehs* or high stone towers on which the dead are exposed until the flesh has been devoured by vultures. Such a tower is still a prominent feature of the landscape near Ray in the vicinity of Teheran.



After death the body of a Zoroastrian is subject to the peculiar ceremony of the *sag-did* or glance of dog, a dog being called in and attracted to the body by the spreading of morsels of bread on or about the corpse, it being believed that the dog's gaze drives away the spirit of defilement. The body is thereafter borne, before being exposed on the *dakhmeh*, to a building serving as a receiving vault which possesses two doors. The burial ceremony requires that the corpse be brought in through one door and removed through the other, symbolizing as Professor Jackson has remarked the idea of birth and death as represented in the Persian couplet:

What is the world? It is simply a halting place,  
with two gates.  
By the one ye enter; by the other ye depart.

After chantings by a priest over the dead the body is then transported to the *dakhmeh* where the clothes are removed and it is laid with the head to the south. After the bones have been denuded by vultures the skeleton is removed to another part of the *dakhmeh* and there left to crumble into dust.

But it was the maintenance of an eternal flame of fire by the Zoroastrians which most interested me on the occasion of visiting Yezd and Kerman, representative as that rite is of perhaps the oldest religious ceremony perpetuated today in the world.

In Yezd there are now two such flames preserved, both having been transferred from the separate localities which they formerly occupied in the city to the central and modern Zoroastrian temple erected a few years ago in the Zoroastrian quarter. Tavernier has observed in his account left of his travels that "there were never any people more jealous of concealing the mysteries of their religion" than the Zoroastrians. In spite of all his efforts he was unsuccessful in gaining admittance to a sight of the Zoroastrian fire in Kerman.

Nor were we more successful in our endeavors to obtain a sight of either of the two flames preserved behind locked doors in the

temple at Yezd. One of these fires, the most important, is maintained in a raised recess of the room in which worship is conducted. In the roof of this room a circular aperture has been left exposed to admit a sight of the sky to devotees of the faith. These stand, in the place of worship, unadorned and unfurnished except for a small picture representing Zoroaster, facing the fire which is exposed when they are assembled, the fire being tended and kept perpetually burning by a priest.

Here in Yezd burns a fire which our ancestors worshiped thousands of years ago on the highlands of the Hindu Kush. Here is a rite forming a central element in a religion revealed by Zoroaster which had an extraordinary influence on the development of that Judaism which culminated in Christianity. Here is truly a pilgrimage repaying us for all the discomforts of our long desert journey where we may worship, or at least do reverence to, the oldest gods of our blood surviving today on the earth.

## CHAPTER V

### MITHRAISM, THE MAGI AND ZOROASTRIANISM

OF ALL the interest which Kerman and Yezd, those two desert cities far removed from the principal centers of population in Persia, possess in so far as concerns their checkered history and their distinctive aspect, none exceeds that consequent upon their character as the last settlements of the Persian worshipers of Zoroaster.

To us, members of an Indo-European people, Zoroastrianism possesses an interest, moreover, far exceeding that implicit in the tenets of an old Persian faith or that attaching to it as an esoteric religion embraced by but a few thousand people. For Zoroastrianism represents not only a residuum of the more ancient nature worship of the earliest Aryans which was perpetuated by the Magi and the followers of Mithraism but, even more important to the remnants of the Christian world, Zoroastrianism and the correlative faith of Mithraism represent certain of the essential origins of Christianity itself.

Owing to an understandable prejudice on the part of Christian theologians, who have doubtless been troubled by the implications of an intimate and causal relationship of Mithraism and Zoroastrianism with Christianity, few there are who are aware generally that the principal tenets of Christianity have their origin in Persia rather than in Judea. And still fewer are those who appreciate the original significance of the celebration of Christmas on December twenty-fifth as an ancient Mithraic festival at the winter solstice, symbolical of the nativity of the sun, or the possible significance of Easter as representing the No-Ruz Aryan festival of the resurrection of nature or of life each spring.

Herodotus, Father of History and the first great traveler of whom there is record, has left a description of the religion of the

Persians, presumably based on his visit to Susa in the fifth century B. C., which accords admirably with our general knowledge of the primitive Aryan religion :

The Persians ascend the highest peaks of the mountains and offer sacrifice to Zeus, calling the whole vault of the sky, Zeus, and they also sacrifice to Sun, Moon, Earth, Fire, Water and Winds.

Herodotus's account of the Persian religion mirrored the prevailing practices of a primitive nature worship, polytheistic in character, in which worship of the god of the sky, Ahura, was conjoined with worship of the god of the sun, Mithra, with that of the Winds, Anahita, and of the Moon, the Water and Earth. For Herodotus, of course, the term, Zeus, was merely conveniently employed to denote Ahura, the sky god, and to relate the prevailing religion of the Persians with that of Athens in a name which would be comprehensible to the Greeks.

From a very remote time, going back undoubtedly to a period before the separation of the Aryan tribes of Persia from those other Aryans whose westward emigration from central Asia was destined to lead to the formation of the Indo-European races of today, the pre-emigrant Aryan peoples held in peculiar veneration the sky, the earth, the sun, water, fire and winds. In those natural elements or manifestations of nature they found harbingers of their primitive weals and of their early woes.

It was not in the later skeptical spirit of Omar Khayyam :

And that inverted Bowl we call the Sky,  
Whereunder crawling coop't we live and die,  
Lift not thy hands to *It* for help—for *It*  
Rolls impotently on as 'Thou and I.

that the Aryans looked upon the sky and the god, Ahura. Rather it was with the most profound awe and reverence and out of a desire to propitiate those omnipotent gods of the sky and of the earth and of the sun that sacred fire altars were maintained on



the commanding heights of the mountains throughout Iran for the propitiation of those spirits of nature and to mark a sense of man's deep humility in their presence.

The perpetual flames of fire which are preserved today by the followers of Zoroaster; the *dakhmehs* or towers of silence on which the Zoroastrian dead are exposed to avoid contamination with the earth and with water, are modern survivals of a nature worship which antedates even Zoroaster as well as Abraham and Moses. There survives, besides, even today among the Moslem population in the villages of Persia a sense of reverence toward fire which is expressed in the common salutation, "*Salaam alei-kom*," given when the first lighted lamp or candle is brought into the room in the evening. Buckingham, in 1829, first correctly interpreted the most probable origin of this custom which survives in 1935 in the Persian countryside, although it is doubtful if any who now practice it appreciate its ancient significance.

With the occupation of what is now Persia by the prehistoric Aryan tribes of the Hyrcanians, the Medes and the Persians, there arose among the Medes, inhabiting the northwest part of the country, a priestly caste known as the Magi (from whence comes our word magician). These came to be looked upon as the conservers and the properly ordained practitioners of the forms and ceremonies which had by degrees become accepted as the ritual proper to the nature worship by which the favor of the gods of the Aryans inhabiting Persia was obtained.

From this priestly caste, it is generally believed, there arose in the seventh century B. C., the Magus Zoroaster, or Zarathustra, the date of whose birth has been established by Professor Herzfeld as 570 B. C., and who was thus a contemporary of Darius. Professor Jackson, the great authority on Zoroaster, has conjectured the place of his birth as in the neighborhood of Lake Rezayieh in the province of Persia now known as Azerbaijan. After protracted wanderings in the east and south of Persia, Zoroaster is believed to have converted Hytaspes, father of Darius the Great, to his faith, which was adhered to in turn by Darius, and, dying, to have left behind him the principles of one

of the oldest, if not the oldest, monotheistic religions in the world.

While accepting and preserving much of the ritual and ceremonial observances of the primitive nature worship of his people as practiced by the Magi, Zoroaster appears to have sought to purify the older faith in ridding it so far as he was able of what he conceived to be its dross and in restricting the adherence of his followers to a single god, Ahura, the god of the sky of the Magi. This god was invested by him with those personal attributes of benevolence and justice and goodness which came later to characterize the god Jehovah of the Jews who, however, as a reference to the Scriptures will show, was far from possessing so early the benevolent aspects characterizing Ahura, god of the Zoroastrians.

It is doubtful if the faith of Zoroaster found any more general acceptance in Persia in Zoroaster's lifetime or during the period immediately following his death than Christianity did in the lifetime or in the years immediately following the death of Christ. As, in the case of Christianity, it was not until the fourth century that Christianity became popularized by its acceptance as the State religion under the Roman Emperor Constantine, so, in the case of the faith of Zoroaster, it was not until the great revival of Persian tradition and culture under the Sassanian dynasty that Zoroastrianism became a truly popular and widely accepted faith in Persia.

By that time its tenets and practices had become so interlarded with those of the older religion of Mithra, out of which it had grown and which continued to flourish alongside it and to find outside of Persia a greater extension even than Zoroastrianism, that it is not always easy today to distinguish the pure traits of Zoroastrianism from the essentially Mithraic elements which affected both its origin and its own development.

The chief source of knowledge of the principles of the Zoroastrian faith is the sacred book, the Avesta, which exists, however, only in fragments. Moreover, of this work only a portion is accepted as the work of the prophet himself. Our knowledge of Zoroastrianism is gained from the Avesta and the inscriptions of

the Achæmenians which, significantly from the time of Darius the Great, make acknowledgment to one supreme god, Ahura-Mazda.

The essential elements of Zoroastrianism, apart from the acknowledgment of one supreme god, are to be found in the conception of the conflict between good and evil represented by the good spirit, Ormazd, and the evil spirit, Ahriman; in the belief in a final judgment after death; and in that of after rewards in a resurrection in heaven or hell. Ranged with the good spirit in his support are numerous angels, while a host of demons are postulated as supporting the evil spirit.

Here, of course, are easily recognized elements common to Christianity. They are not, however, it is important to note, beliefs which entered into the Jewish faith before the carrying of the Jews into captivity to Babylon in 588 B. C. by Nebuchadnezzar.

It is of sufficient importance to the subject to examine these parallels or even identities between Zoroastrianism and the later faith of Judea, which culminated in Christianity, in somewhat more detail.

In both faiths there is recognition of one supreme god, the belief in heaven and hell and in immortality, the belief in the presence alongside the one supreme god of a holy spirit, the recognition of the existence also of an evil spirit, the recognition of God as the creator of the world; and in both there is posited a belief in the individual soul's salvation and in a bodily resurrection after death. In the one religion, God is known as Jehovali and in the other as Ahura; in Christianity the holy spirit is known as the holy ghost and in Zoroastrianism as Ormazd; in the one there is an evil spirit, Satan, and in the other, the evil spirit, Ahriman.

These and other no less important identities have long attracted the notice of scholars and have perplexed the theological student, all the more that these common elements of the two faiths do not make their appearance in the Old Testament until after the contact of the Jews with the Persians in Babylon. It was that city, it may be recalled, which became about 538 B. C. one of the cap-

itals of the Persian Empire after Cyrus had extended the confines of Persia to the Mediterranean.

Courageous and enlightened theologians, as, for example, Dr. Lawrence Mills in *Our Own Religion in Ancient Persia*, have given deep thought and study to these identities and their significance. In Doctor Mills's study he has not failed to stress the significance of the absence from the pre-exilic Bible of the conception of any future judgment of the good and evil, or of any heaven or hell. Commenting upon the Ten Commandments, he has remarked that in them there is to be found neither mention of any last judgment nor of any just reward or punishment, while there is not so much as a hint of a future state after death. In fact, as he observes, "a conscious and accountable immortality was scarcely mentioned before Isaiah; that is to say, not before the Captivity, whereas the Zoroastrian scriptures are one mass of spiritualism, referring all final results to the heavenly or infernal worlds."

Quoting from the Avesta, "Let Angra Mainyu (or Ahriman) the evil spirit, be hid beneath the earth—let the Daevas (the demons) disappear, let the dead arise and let bodily life be sustained in these now lifeless bodies," Doctor Mills contrasts this with the earlier Scriptural passages "void as they are of any genuine statement of this important dogma." He adds: "Compare these, then, with statements which appear after the return from the Captivity, a captivity during which the tribes had come into contact with a great religion."

From "these historical facts," Doctor Mills concludes that the points adduced "show that they contain the very essential elements of 'our own religion' in its advanced, if still formative, condition, from the date of the Captivity, or before the time of Christ, and after the Restoration from the Exile." He continues:

First of all there was God's unity as the greatest of the deities and with a name far more appropriate than our own for Him. He has the attributes of Justice, Benevolence, Authority, Inspiring Energy . . . Universal Weal and Eternity. There were these latter at times personified as Archangels; . . . there was a human immortality.



There was a Demonology with the most pronounced Satan of all literature. . . .

There was to be a judgment personal and universal . . . and also a future Heaven. . . . For the evil a corresponding Hell exists in equal degree.

Yet with all this convincing array of evidence, Doctor Mills, in common with most other Christian commentators, recoils from the obvious conclusion of the direct influence which these beliefs, formulated by Zoroaster five centuries and more before the time of Christ, had upon Jewish thought during the period of Jewish captivity in Persian Babylon, as well as subsequent to their restoration to a Jerusalem which, for many years thereafter, fell within the domains of the Persian Empire.

The most that Doctor Mills will allow is that any or all of the historical and doctrinal statements recorded in the Old and New Testaments might "while fervently believed to be inspired by the Divine Power, be yet fully traced, if the facts would allow it, to other religious systems for their mere mental initiative." At the same time, and none the less, he asserts a belief in the separate origin of Christianity and Zoroastrianism.

Doctor Moulton, a British Zoroastrian scholar, while admitting that, in the doctrines of a future life, an ethical system of rewards and punishments in the hereafter, and in the resurrection, Zoroaster anticipated Christianity and Judaism, and that, moreover, "it was a few generations after the return from Babylon that the Jews began to realize the Great Hope (of a future life) for the first time," nevertheless concludes with the vague comment: "And yet it does not seem possible to believe that the Jews got an impulse from their neighbors during the Captivity." Such a conclusion bears the marks of wish-fulfillment rather than of any elements of logic or reason.

Actually, in Babylon and in Susa or Shushan, as well as in Ecbatana, the several capitals of the Persian Empire where the Jews resided during Achæmenian times, the Biblical Scriptures themselves reveal the Jews as enjoying to a singular degree the confidence of the Achæmenian monarchs. Far from being rele-

gated to any such despised rôle of outcasts by those early Aryan rulers, as in present-day Germany, or as formerly in Tsarist Russia, the Books of Ezra and Nehemiah, Daniel and Esther make it manifest that the Jews occupied positions of esteem and consequence of a character to make it unquestionable that their contact with the Persians and the Persian Court was implicit of a close and intimate acquaintance with the prevailing Persian religions of Mithraism and Zoroastrianism.

From the recently discovered Mond papyri, Cambyses is recorded as having especially exempted the Jewish temple at Elephantine from the destructive measures decreed against the religions practiced in Egypt. Moreover, Esther, it will be recalled, became one of the Queens of Ahasuerus, or Xerxes, and her relative, Mordecai, his adviser, while Daniel was a vizier of both Cyrus and Darius. And such was the favor shown by Cyrus for the Jews that, as recounted in Ezra, in the first year following his capture of Babylon (538 B. C.), he made a proclamation decreeing the restoration of the temple in Jerusalem and the restoration of the Jews to the number of 42,360 to their home from the captivity in which they had been held since the days of Nebuchadnezzar.

Not all the Jews took advantage of the opportunity thus afforded them to return to Jerusalem, nor did the Jews who returned find it possible to proceed undisturbed with their task of restoring the temple and the walls of that city. Ezra recited that the "people of the land" harassed the Jews in all possible ways, "hiring counsellors against them, to frustrate their purpose, all the days of Cyrus king of Persia, even until the reign of Darius." This harassment continued likewise, according to Ezra, through the reigns of Ahasuerus—Xerxes—and Artaxerxes, the last-mentioned of whom went so far as to order the work to cease upon representations made to him that if Jerusalem were rebuilt and the walls set up again the inhabitants would not pay toll or tribute and "so shalt thou endamage the revenue of the kings."

Subsequently, renewed appeals were made to the Persian Court by the Jews in which reference was made to the decree of Cyrus

in favor of the restoration of Jerusalem. Moved by those representations a search was made in the house of the rolls, or the record office, where, according to Ezra, there was found at length at Achmetha (the Aramaic name for Ecbatana) "in the palace that is in the province of the Medes," a copy of the decree of Cyrus. Whereupon, Darius II replied to the civil authorities in Jerusalem: "Let the work of the house of God alone. . . . I, Darius, have made a decree; let it be done with speed."

The troubles of the Jews were not yet overcome, however, for intrigues continued against their labor. Nehemiah, who appears to have been a trusted cup-bearer of Artaxerxes II, sets forth in a strikingly vivid account the manner in which he obtained authorization of the king to oversee the work of restoration and to further it, while, similarly, Ezra quotes the text of a decree issued in his favor by the same monarch, a remarkable document in which the King not only pledged money and assistance for the work of restoration but likewise invested Ezra with plenary powers to appoint judges and magistrates.

The Old Testament itself, consequently, from the evidence which has been adduced, testifies to the intimate relations of trust and confidence enjoyed by the Jews with more than one Achæmenian monarch. Moreover, the absence from the pre-exilic Jewish writers of those elements in the doctrines of Judaism which later came to characterize that faith which found culmination in Christianity—elements which existed, however, in Zoroastrianism before the Jewish Captivity—make it reasonable and logical to conclude that those elements were directly derived from Persia rather than that they had an independent development in Jewish thought. If evidence is to be marshaled to the contrary, it would appear, in the face of the evidence here outlined but briefly, to be behooving upon theological scholars to undertake to set forth some substantial arguments to disprove the obvious derivation of the principal tenets of Christianity from Zoroastrianism and Mithraism rather than to be content with vague asseverations, in the presence of the identities between the two national religions, of which the Persian is the admitted elder,

that "it does not seem possible to believe that the Jews got an impulse from their neighbors during the Captivity."

One of the most recent students of the subject, Professor F. J. F. Jackson, of the Union Theological Seminary, in a brief but searching article on *The Influence of Iran upon Early Judaism and Christianity*, has perhaps gone farther in outlining the debt of Judaism and Christianity to Zoroastrianism than any previous Christian scholar. Unfortunately Professor Jackson's article did not come to the notice of the author until after this portion of his book had been drafted. No study, however, of a problem which Professor Jackson terms one of the most perplexing in human history can afford to neglect his profoundly illuminating examination, particularly valuable for its refreshing frankness and for its refusal to dodge the issues which the subject raises.

Frankly conceding that "historians of the life and thought in the Christian Church have uniformly displayed a tendency to ignore the important part played by the religious ideas of Iran," Professor Jackson shows that it was only during the Captivity that the Jews developed an abhorrence of idolatry and of "the folly of the ceremonialism of an unmoral religion" such as had been previously taught them by their prophets. Stressing the like abhorrence of the worship of images on the part of the followers of Zoroaster and the remarkable sympathy displayed by the Achæmenian kings for the Jews, Professor Jackson adds:

But Persia did more than protect Judaism: it enriched it. The religion of Israel had taught that God exercised a righteous, but somewhat arbitrary rule. Like a terrible king He did evil as well as good. But under Persian influence the Jews began to realize that life is a struggle between good and evil with God always on the side of good, that there are two spiritual worlds in conflict with one another. Satan thus became to the Jews, not merely the angel who accused Israel, but the enemy of God. Moreover, the unseen world became populous with the spiritual ministers of God at war with the satellites of Satan. The strife was constant and the issue apparently doubtful; but in the end God must win. A deliverer would be sent; Satan's hosts would be sub-



dued; and God would triumph in the end. Out of this aspect of Judaism, as modified by Zoroastrianism, Christianity emerged. . . . Thus it came to pass that some of the leading ideas which lay at the foundation of the Christian religion were developed under the influence of Zoroastrian doctrine, the conflict with Satan and his hosts, the expectation of a superhuman deliverer—popularly known to the Jews as the Messiah—and of the establishment of God's kingdom.

While Zoroaster is not mentioned by name either in the Achæmenian inscriptions or in Herodotus, there is abundant evidence of the prestige which the Magi and the Mithraic religion, analogous to Zoroastrianism, enjoyed in Greece at an early date, as well as throughout the world centering about the Mediterranean. The Magi, or the Wise Men of the East, are mentioned frequently in early Greek literature and it is recorded that Plato (c. 428-c. 348 B. C.) had the intention of visiting Persia for the express purpose of studying the religion of the Persians, a plan which he was only prevented from executing by the wars of Greece with Persia. If other countries set such store by the professions of faith of the Magi and if so great a philosopher as Plato thought it worth his while to consider a visit to Persia for a study of Persian faiths and beliefs, the conclusion would appear to be all the more strengthened that the Jews must have been themselves powerfully influenced by Persian thought at that period of intimate association with Persian life when the efforts of the Hebrew Prophets to interpret the meaning of existence were in a formative and as yet undeveloped state.

Nor was it during the Captivity alone that Jewish thought was susceptible of being influenced by Persian religious doctrines. The intimate association of the Jews of the Captivity with Persia extended only for some two hundred years from the time of the taking of Babylon by Cyrus in 538 B. C. to the fall of the Persian Empire in 331 B. C., when Jerusalem and Babylon ceased to form part of the Persian Empire and fell within the dominions of Alexander the Great. But, for a far longer period, from the time of the extension of the Persian Empire under Cyrus to the shores

of the Mediterranean until the birth of Christ, and for many years thereafter, the followers of Mithra established that cult the length and breadth of the Persian Empire and throughout the Greek and Roman Empires which succeeded it.

The absence of mention of Zoroaster by Herodotus and the prominence given the Magi in the records which have been left of the Achæmenian period of Persian history are suggestive of the fact generally accepted by scholars that Zoroastrianism never became a popular religion in Persia until its acceptance as the national religion of Persia by the Sassanian dynasty in the third century after Christ.

Zoroaster, like Christ more than five centuries later, formulated a doctrine which was too far in advance of the capacity of the people generally to comprehend. It is true that it would appear to have been accepted by Darius and by the court circle of the Achæmenians but there was nothing in those times of the intolerant and exclusive religious fanaticism which came later to distinguish the world. Gods were less universal than local; even among the Greeks, contemporaneous with the Achæmenians, local deities commanded a respect which did not make them less revered in the absence of their universal acceptance. Consequently, there would not necessarily be a prejudice manifested on the part of those Achæmenian rulers who had adopted Zoroastrianism to the continued profession by the people of the worship of Mithra.

The popular religion in Persia until the Sassanian dynasty appears always to have been the Mithra worship as it was interpreted by the Magi. So popular, in fact, was the worship of Mithra or the sun god, the god of light who was in eternal struggle with the evil forces of darkness, that Zoroaster, as is known, embodied many of the principles of Mithraism in the new faith, while recognizing Mithra as second only to the one supreme god, Ahura-Mazda. In the calendar the seventh month was dedicated to Mithra and in Achæmenian inscriptions he is invoked along with Ahura.

As time went on the religion of Mithraism observed by the

masses, in its turn, adopted certain of the conceptions of Zoroastrianism and it was Mithraism or Mazdakism rather than Zoroastrianism which became diffused throughout the Persian Empire as far as the Mediterranean. The Magi, interpreters of the religion of Mithraism, established themselves in Palestine, as well as in the farthest reaches of the Empire, while under the Macedonian and Roman Empires the worship of Mithra was extended to Gaul and as far as the British Isles.

As Mithraism extended itself in countries other than Persia, it gradually embodied in its doctrines other religious ideas with which it came in contact. Thus, in addition to the doctrines of Zoroastrianism it became imbued with the religious doctrines of Babylon and the local beliefs which flourished throughout Asia Minor, as well as with Hellenic ideas.

As a composite religion, therefore, embodying the beliefs of most of the peoples of the Middle East, Mithraism became thus diffused in the end by Rome to the remotest limits of the Roman Empire. Testimony of this is to be had in the many Mithraic monuments which have been dug up from one end of that former Empire to another, from the Black Sea to the Atlantic and from the Caspian to the Mediterranean. It finally became the most popular religion of the Roman aristocracy itself, spreading with astonishing rapidity during the first century of the Christian era and becoming so formidable a rival of Christianity that for a long while the issue appeared undecided whether Mithraism or Christianity would become the universal religion of Europe.

The resemblances between the two faiths were such as to have called forth from an early time the protestations of Christians that the Mithraic mysteries were Satanic counterfeits of the one true religion. In Mithraism, as it developed beyond Persia, there is the legend of the shepherds attending the birth of the sun, the flood and the ark, the fiery chariot, the use of bell and candle, holy water and communion, the doctrine of heaven and hell, the atonement, the immortality of the soul, the last judgment, the resurrection of the body, the fiery destruction of the universe, and the sanctification of Sunday and December twenty-fifth.

Of the direct influence of Mithraism on Christianity and Christian practices, there may be instanced as indubitably established the adoption by the Christian Church, at the end of the third or at the beginning of the fourth century, of December twenty-fifth as the date of the birth of Christ which had been previously celebrated on January sixth.

Sir James G. Frazer in that world classic, *The Golden Bough*, has observed that "in the Julian calendar the twenty-fifth of December was reckoned the winter solstice, and it was regarded as the Nativity of the Sun, because the day begins to lengthen and the power of the sun to increase from that turning-point of the year," adding that :

The ritual of the nativity, as it appears to have been celebrated in Syria and Egypt, was remarkable. The celebrants retired into certain inner shrines, from which at midnight they issued with a loud cry, "The Virgin has brought forth! The light is waxing."

This ritual attended the worship of the Oriental goddess known as the Heavenly Virgin, while there was likewise a ritual observance of the twenty-fifth of December by the Mithraists.

As is known the Bible does not identify the day of the year of Christ's birth and it was only some years after Christ's death that there developed an arbitrary commemoration of the day as January sixth. Frazer quotes an early Syrian writer, himself a Christian, as to the reasons occasioning the adoption by the Christian Church of the Mithraic festival of December twenty-fifth:

"The reason," he tells us, "why the fathers transferred the celebration of the sixth of January to the twenty-fifth of December was this. It was a custom of the heathen to celebrate on the twenty-fifth of December the birthday of the Sun, at which they kindled lights in token of festivity. In these solemnities and festivities the Christians also took part. Accordingly when the doctors of the Church perceived that the Christians had a leaning to this festival, they took coun-



sel and resolved that the true Nativity should be solemnized on that day and the festival of the Epiphany on the sixth of January."

"Thus it appears," Sir J. G. Frazer remarks, "that the Christian Church chose to celebrate the birthday of its Founder on the twenty-fifth of December in order to transfer the devotion of the heathen from the Sun to Him who was called the Son of Righteousness."

Frazer, moreover, perceives no intrinsic improbability in the conjecture that "motives of the same sort may have led the ecclesiastical authorities to assimilate the Easter festival of the death and resurrection of their Lord" to that of the widespread celebration in antiquity, particularly along the Mediterranean, of the death and resurrection of the god, Attis, at the vernal equinox. Such an assimilation becomes all the more suggestive when it is considered that the celebration of the death and resurrection of Christ in the spring coincided, moreover, with the Mithraic celebration, from a remote period of antiquity, of No-Ruz on the occasion of the death of winter and the old year and of the birth of spring and the new year.

Further, apart from the evidence of the Christian Syrian writer quoted by Sir J. G. Frazer, the coincidences of the Christian with Mithraic festivals and of Christian doctrine with the tenets of Mithraism and Zoroastrianism appear to be too close and too numerous to be accidental.

The story of the Magi or the three wise men of the East who came to Jerusalem, "Saying, Where is he that is born King of the Jews? For we have seen his star in the east, and are come to worship him," and who were guided to the place of Christ's birth in Bethlehem by a star, in itself constitutes evidence of the most revealing kind of the part played in the imagination of the early followers of Christ by the Magi and Mithra worship.

The incident of the Magi, which is found only in the Gospel of Matthew, bears all the marks of those apocryphal accounts which insensibly enter into all religions after the death of the founders for the purpose of magnifying their characters by the

interpolation of supernatural elements. To the primitive minds of the early disciples of the great religious teachers of Asia, dominated by an awe of nature, signs from heaven invariably attended the birth or death of a Prophet in the form of great convulsions of nature or, as in this case, by the departure of a star from its natural course to guide the Wise Men of the East, the Magi, to the manger in Bethlehem. The story of the Magi, as given in Matthew, thus serves at the same time both to impart a supernatural character to the birth of Christ and to evidence the acknowledgment of the Magi to the god-like nature of Jesus and thereby to attract the adherents of Mithraism to a worship which was contending with that faith for the mastery of men's minds.

This is not to charge Matthew, or the author of that Gospel, with conscious deceit, for the legend was undoubtedly one which had developed not only out of a pure faith but also out of a credulity which, alas, has too often marked man's search for so-called eternal truths. Even in our own times men continue to ignore the fact that the lives of the great ethical teachers of humanity are testimony enough of a profound elevation of soul and of greatness of character without the tawdry varnishing and adornments of fables and legends with which their followers insist upon investing those rising above the dead level of mankind.

In endeavoring thus to sketch in briefest outline the contributions of the ancient Persian religions of Mithraism and Zoroastrianism to the development of Christianity, it has been with no thought of detracting thereby from the ethical values inherent in the Christian faith. Rather the purpose has been to underline the evolutionary character of Christianity, in common with all religions, which have encompassed great ethical values in a cloak of supernaturalism representing the persistence, from earliest primitive times, of an adherence to magical practices and a belief in the efficacy of magic.

If through the painful and slow evolutionary ascent of man in his efforts to master his environment, magic has passed imperceptibly into religion and into the formulation of man's code of ethics, man's upward and onward march is likely to be furthered

rather than hindered by a recognition of this ideological evolutionary process. In the light of the history and development of natural species by slow growth from simple to ever more complex forms, of man's evolution from a unicellular form of life rather than from a fully developed Adam and Eve, a study of the religions of Persia and Asia assist us in comprehending that it was by no sudden revelation but likewise by a slow evolutionary progress that man has developed an ethical code which has become purer and more consonant with his full and free development as the devotees of magic, the Magi, gave way to Zoroastrianism and Zoroastrianism came in turn to be supplanted by Christianity, Buddhism and Islam.

But the end is not yet in sight, no more as concerns man's physical development than his mental and spiritual development. The gulf which separates the Mithra worship of our early Aryan ancestors from its refined distillation through Zoroastrianism into Christianity may, however, afford some measure of that progressive development of man and of mankind's conception of the universe which may be envisaged in the centuries and millenniums of time which lie ahead, through all the prevailing mists of bigotry and notwithstanding the insensate cruelty and ignorance now characterizing our sub-human civilization.

## CHAPTER VI

### THE SHI'A PILGRIM ROAD THROUGH KHORASAN TO MESHED

#### *1. The Road in History*

THE road from Teheran to Meshed in the northeast corner of Persia is subordinate to none in the country in its rich historical associations. From the earliest times it has served as an important caravan trail from east to west, constituting one of the great means of communication between central Asia and the Mediterranean. Along part of its way Alexander the Great passed in his great progress in the fourth century B. C. from Hamadan through Teheran to Turkestan, Afghanistan and India. In the neighborhood of Damghan, a little more than two hundred miles east of Teheran, the Parthian Empire, which succeeded the Seleucids, arose at Hecatompylos and extended itself to Mesopotamia in the west and to central Asia in the east.

Sassanians and Arabs passed thereafter in ceaseless procession along the great road which skirts the southern slopes of the lofty Elburz Mountains extending in an east-west direction across northern Persia. Along it the Seljuk tribes passed westward from Inner Asia in the course of one of those constant irruptions which distinguished the history of Persia from the dawn of civilization until the last century. The Seljuks, who lingered long enough before establishing themselves on the Bosphorus to erect lofty monuments which still endure as testimonies to their culture, were succeeded by the Mongols. Carrying destruction everywhere in their wake, the hordes of Genghis Khan themselves left descendants whose attention was diverted to other pursuits than the erection of pyramids of skulls and the spreading of fire and carnage. Some of their monuments, erected over the



memorials of their predecessors, against which they had flung themselves in insensate rage, still remain. Where they survive they do so after having been subjected to the ravages of the army of Tamerlane and to the turmoils incident to that troubled period of Persian history in the eighteenth century which gave birth to Nadir Shah. The spirit of the latter, moreover, lingers on in the great province of Khorasan which forms the northeastern region of Persia in which Meshed is situated. Near there he was born in obscurity and in that vicinity which houses the dust of the Caliph Haroun-al-Raschid, he lies buried after his assassination at the hands of the soldiery he had led to the plunder of the fabulous wealth of Delhi.

The long road, leading from Teheran to Meshed and there branching out to India, east to Afghanistan and north to the Soviet Union, brings the traveler also to the homes at Nishapur and Tus of the immortal Omar Khayyam and Firdausi.

Through all the vicissitudes of the past one thousand years, moreover, the city of Meshed, containing the tomb of Ali Reza, eighth Imam, has attracted to that shrine, the most sacred in Persia of the Shi'a faith, thousands of pilgrims every year. The living thereby acquire the title "Meshedi"; the dead, who are transported thither to be buried within the sacred precincts of the shrine area, gain thereby a title to paradise.

Persians, Medes, Greeks, Romans, Parthians, Sassanians, Arabs, Seljuk Turks, Mongols—one and all have passed in procession down this corridor of history. For thousands of years the East poured itself in endless swarms out of Asia. Greece or Macedon in the person of Alexander the Great was the first to reverse the movement when undertaking the conquest of Asia from Europe. After Alexander's time Rome threatened Parthia and the Persian Empire of the Sassanians but never succeeded in passing permanently the barriers created by the great Iranian plateau. Arabs, however, from their desert retreat succeeded in the seventh century where Rome had failed but were obliged soon to retreat before the Seljuk Turks and the Mongols.

At length, in 1502 Persia came again into its own with the

establishment of the Sefavid dynasty. That dynasty fell in 1722 before the last invasion from the east, that of the Afghans. Freed from their yoke by Nadir Shah, the Napoleon of the East, Persia shortly after was all but swallowed by a new pressure, that of the imperialist west, exerted by the respective empires of Great Britain and Russia.

First Greece, then Rome and then the Arabs had pressed upon Persia from the west. Through all the never-ending irruptions of tribes from the east Persia had held its own on that flank until overrun by the Seljuk Turks and the Mongols. These remained but for a little while or were assimilated by a people who might be dominated for a time by force but never for long by the spirit.

Along that narrow ribbon of road which extends for some six hundred miles from Teheran to Meshed the history of Persia lies in great part, as it was written by Alexander, the Parthians, the Seljuk Turks, the Mongols, Tamerlane, and Nadir Shah.

## 2. *Semnan*

The route from Teheran to Meshed has been many times described, most notably by James Fraser, O'Donovan, Curzon and Jackson. The physical aspect of the country, a succession of rolling barren hills, dotted occasionally by the oasis which marks a village or a town, need not therefore detain us. It is man's past which will most concern us.

From Teheran to Firouzkuh, a distance a little short of ninety miles, the road is identical with that which leads to Meshed-i-Sar at the eastern end of the Caspian. This portion of the route represents a relatively new way which diverts the traveler from the more ancient passage along which Alexander proceeded from Ray, adjoining Teheran, to the Caspian Gates in his pursuit of Darius III, the last of the Achaemenian kings. The latter route, lying south of the old road, is now abandoned by motor traffic, although paralleled partly by the new railway which is being built through Teheran from the Caspian Sea to the Gulf.

Fifty miles beyond Firouzkuh, where the road forks in descending north through the Elburz to the Caspian, lies the town of Semnan. First mentioned by Ptolemy as Semina, the locality is most notable as the site in the center of the bazaars of a vast Seljuk mosque which once extended over a considerable area. Built in the eleventh or twelfth century it was destroyed by the Mongols in 1221 A. D. with the exception of the brick minaret which still rises some hundred feet in height alongside the present mosque which was built on the site of the old. In 1424 A. D. a minister of Shah Rukh (1404-1447 A. D.), son of Tamerlane, constructed in front of the sanctuary southwest of the court of the existing mosque the great "aivan" which bears an inscription with his name.

Before the road east is resumed, lunch is obtained in a *chai-khaneh* in Semnan in front of which a crowd of tatterdemalion Persians have assembled to exchange recitations of the odes of Hafiz. Ahuan lies twenty-five miles beyond, containing a brick caravanserai of the seventeenth century and a still older structure which has been attributed to a period as remote as Chosroes I (531-579 A. D.).

From this village for some hundreds of miles the road until quite recently was constantly exposed to the raids of Turcoman tribes from the desert steppes lying athwart the Perso-Russian frontier. These Turcomans, who still inhabit the frontier region and whose tents extend far into Russian territory, have been accustomed until only a few years ago to dash in their sudden raids into the region traversed by the Meshed road to plunder pilgrims or other wayfarers and even to carry away into captivity the young and old of both sexes for a ransom or as slaves. Scattered over the countryside there may still be seen the remains of mud wall enclosures erected in the fields to serve as places of refuge for the inhabitants from Turcoman inroads.

Representing the last wave of eastern nomads who for centuries have flung themselves upon the Persian plateau, their raids were finally brought to an end in 1928. In that year reprisals in the form of bombing attacks by airplanes were taken by the Persian

Government against their improvised settlements along the north eastern frontier in retaliation for their marauding incursions. Since that year the Meshed road has been safe from their attacks which once caused such terror to the traveler who had occasion to journey this way.

### 3. *Damghan and the Birth of the Parthian Power*

Damghan, one of the most important and one of the most ancient inhabited sites in northern Persia, lies somewhat more than seventy miles from Semnan. Aside from the interest of its monuments of various eras, the town is of special importance as being within the near vicinity of the site of the ancient city of Hecatompylos, the early seat of the Parthian Empire.

Dr. E. Schmidt, who excavated from 1931 to 1933 to the south of Damghan in an endeavor to locate that city, was unable to find any vestige of it. Nevertheless, he remains convinced with other scholars that the early capital of Parthia is to be sought, if not in the immediate vicinity of Damghan, within a radius of it of perhaps twenty miles.

Of Parthia and the Parthians, whose power for a period of three centuries from 65 B. C. to 226 A. D. was second only to that of the Roman Empire, the little that is known is principally derived from their coins and from the accounts left of them by their great rivals, the Romans. Occupying originally a territory roughly inclusive of the modern province of Khorasan as far westward as the neighborhood of modern Damghan, the Parthians eventually extended their dominion over practically the whole of Persia until they had made themselves masters of the Middle East.

Of a people who were to form a great empire which endured for three centuries there is no mention in either the Old Testament or the Zend Avesta of Zoroaster. Rawlinson considers them to have been of Turanian rather than Aryan origin and to have represented "a race closely allied to the vast hordes which from a remote antiquity have roamed over the steppe region of



Upper Asia, from time to time bursting upon the south, and harassing or subjugating the comparatively unwarlike inhabitants of the warmer countries" (*The Sixth Great Oriental Monarchy*). Having settled as an independent tribe on the northern confines of Persia they were incorporated within the new Persian Empire by Cyrus the Great.

Not until after the collapse of the Seleucid power, which succeeded the Achæmenians following the victory over Persia of Alexander the Great, did Parthia come again into its own. Then, from its capital of Hecatompylos not only did it succeed in recovering its independence but it rose to exert its dominance from Seleucia, to which it transferred the seat of its dominion, as far as the borders of the Roman Empire. Rawlinson describes them:

Not merely the sole rival which dared to stand up against Rome in the interval between B. C. 65 and A. D. 226, but they were a rival falling in many respects very little below the great power whose glories have thrown them so much into the shade. They maintained from first to last a freedom unknown to later Rome; they excelled the Romans in toleration and in liberal treatment of foreigners, they equalled them in manufactures and in material prosperity, and they fell but little short of them in the extent and productiveness of their dominions. They were the second power in the world for nearly three centuries.

Nothing remains revealed in Damghan or in its vicinity today of the evidence of that Parthian power which was later to succumb not to Rome but to a new national Persian dynasty, that of the Sassanians. Nor is there visible any evidence of that march through Damghan of Alexander the Great in 330 B. C. on his way to Hyrcania after the celebration at Hecatompylos of his victory over Darius III. A century later the tramp of the armies of Antiochus the Great was heard in the neighborhood in 209 B. C., and a thousand years thereafter the armies of Genghis Khan and, subsequently, those of Tamerlane. The latter left outside the city as a grim reminder of his visitation four towers of the heads of his enemies plastered in mud "so high that a man

could scarcely throw a stone over them," according to Clavijo who passed through Damghan on July 17, 1404, when proceeding on his embassy from the Spanish Court to the capital of Tamerlane at Samarcand.

Tamerlane's cruelty was not the only one visited upon the town. In 1763 in the tempestuous period which intervened between the fall of the Sefavid dynasty, the assassination of Nadir Shah, and the advent of the Kajars, a half-brother of the head of the short-lived Zand dynasty perpetrated upon the inhabitants a particularly cruel punishment such as only too often has colored the annals of Persia. On the occasion of a victory over the rising power of the Kajars he caused his captives to be tied to the freshly cut boughs of trees and sunk them in the ground, together with the human victims to which they were attached, in order that his enemies might be suffocated. So also in Damghan a few years later, in 1796, there perished Shah Rukh, the hapless grandson of Nadir Shah, after Aga Mohammed, the first of the Kajars, had ordered poured upon his head a mixture of boiling oil as a crown.

Of interesting monuments in Damghan the first to merit notice is the Mosque of Tari Kane, the most ancient Islamic monument in Persia, built upon foundations which are at least as old as the Sassanian era and may even go back as far as the Parthian period. Of the four primitive mosques of Persia to be found at Demavend, Nain, Ray and Damghan, the last-named is not only one of the best preserved but also probably the oldest, dating as it does from the eighth century. Although conforming to an Arab design, but of Persian construction, deeply influenced by Sassanian traditions of architecture, the mosque, as Monsieur Henri Godard has remarked, presents an especial interest for the history of Persian architecture. As that scholar has shown, the structure of the mosque indicates clearly "that the Abassid Caliphs when they ordered, as described by writers of the time, the construction of great mosques in the principal cities of Persia, imposed the scheme of the plan but left the architects of the country free to execute it after their fashion." The present minaret of the

mosque represents a later construction in burnt brick in replacement of the old minaret which collapsed in the Seljuk period. It was built by a Seljuk governor who was probably responsible both for the minaret of the Friday Mosque at Semnan and for the tomb of his father, known as the Pir-i-Alamdar, in Damghan.

This last mentioned monument in the easterly section of the city and dating from 1026 A. D. consists of a large circular tower of unburnt brick. Of the same period and dated 1054 A. D. is a round tower representing a tomb known as the *Chehel Dokhtaron*, or Forty Daughters, which lies to the northwest of the city. Close by it is the tomb, likewise of the Seljuk era, of the *imam-sadeh* Safar, sixth in descent from the Prophet's son-in-law, Ali. In the court preceding it is a small building constructed by the son of Tamerlane, Shah Rukh.

Damghan, as most old cities of Persia, has its characteristic citadel with earthen walls which extend over an area of some two hundred and fifty yards square. The walls are now in a state of decomposition but from the top of the highest which remain intact an excellent view of the old town may be had, as well as of the surrounding countryside in whose neighborhood Parthians, Sassanians, Arabs and Seljuks have written large the history of Persia.

#### 4. *Damghan to Sabzavar*

With the advent of the automobile in Persia the garage is tending, in the absence of hotels, to replace for the motorist the more ancient caravanserai. In the old caravanserai both the men and the animals which formed the caravan found lodging. In the new garages which have appeared in every town the modern traveler lodges his automobile and rests for the night in rooms built alongside or above. Food is brought from the public kitchens in the bazaar where rice, mutton, chicken, eggs, bread and tea are always available. If the traveler carries with him on his journeys through Persia a folding cot and mattress, a wash basin, a thermos and a few other indispensable odds and ends, there is no intolerable discomfort to be feared while traveling in the most remote

regions of the country. The Markazi garage may be recommended in Damghan and the Massis garage in Sabzavar where the second night of the journey between Teheran and Meshed is generally interrupted.

Shahrud, the first important town of note after Damghan, lies some forty-four miles distant over the same barren rolling countryside which stretches as if interminably over the whole of the plateau region of Persia. Seven miles northeast of Shahrud is the old settlement of Bustam, probably founded by a Sassanian prince of that name who usurped the Sassanian throne for a brief period between 590 and 595 A. D. when he was put to death. Bustam itself consists of two parts, an ancient one now in ruins and the relatively more modern portion where the principal buildings of historic interest are to be found centering about the tomb of the Sufi Sheikh Abu Yezid-el Bastami, who died in 874 A. D.

The tomb of Sheikh Bastami, or Bayazid, as he is better known in English, lies within the precincts of a Seljuk mosque built in 1120 A. D., added to by the Mongol Sultan Uljaitu Khodabendeh, a successor of Hulagu Khan, between the years 1299 and 1313 A. D. Entrance to the tomb and the mosque is gained through a double court. In the outer are the remains of a *medrasseh* or college, the work of the son of Tamerlane, Shah Rukh.

Passing into the inner court through a gateway of colored glazed tiles and stucco work, typical of the Mongol era, a view is had of two conical-shaped tombs on either side of a second handsomely decorated portal. Here are the shrines of Bayazid and his friend, Kasim Khan. To the left is the mosque with its proud minaret consisting of a cylindrical column of yellowish unglazed bricks with raised geometric patterns encircled with texts from the Koran.

Bayazid was a dervish of the mystic order of the Sufis who taught the observance of a loving-kindness toward animals not less than that which it was expected should be shown to men. The story is told of him and of Kasim Khan that when traveling between Shahrud and Bustam, an ant was found among their belongings. Having agreed upon the injustice of carrying the



insect away from its home, Bayazid undertook to return it to the place from which it had unwittingly been transported.

The inhabitants of the two neighboring towns having perceived the presence of a halo about the head of Kasim Khan, who was awaiting the return of Bayazid, a struggle ensued for the possession of the person of the former, during which he was killed. Bayazid, upon learning of what had transpired, rebuked his fellow townsmen so violently for their action that he was stoned to death.

Returning to Shahrud, the road passes through Farashabad with two old citadels in its midst which are crumbling into ruins now that such refuges are no longer needed as fortifications against the dreaded raids of the Turcomans from the north. Farther on, and seventy-five miles from Shahrud, is Miamey containing an imposing caravanserai built in 1655 by Shah Abbas II. Above the town on the heights of the mountains commanding it are the remains of two ancient fortresses. They are both reminders of that ceaseless warfare waged over the region from the dim prehistoric past beginning with the struggle between Turan and Iran, which echoes down to us in the pages of Firdausi's *Shahnameh*, and has continued almost to our day in the raids of the Turanian Turcomans upon the habitations of the modern Iranians.

The road for miles now extends through a region once known as the "Marches of Terror" where raiding Turcomans on their incredibly fleet horses descended in sudden forays upon the inhabitants or upon passing caravans. All along the road even the caravanserais by their structure give evidence of having once served both as resting places and as means of refuge and defense. Thus, at Miandasht, in the midst of a great plain, besides the great Sefavid caravanserai, there is also a huge more modern structure with lofty walls rising to a height of twenty feet, with towers and a parapet to withstand the sudden forages of the Turcoman tribes.

There follow Alhak, with its square watch tower of brick as a sentinel guarding the road, Abbasabad, named after Shah Abbas

the Great who transplanted thither a colony of Georgian Christians about 1600 as a frontier guard against the Turcomans, Bahmanabad, with a name reminiscent of the Zend Avesta, Mazinan, Mihr and Khowsrowgird, or city of Chosroes. †

These towns and villages are one and all of a most remote antiquity. In Mazinan, whose environs abound in ruins, are two battered caravanserais, one attributed to Shah Abbas and the other to the son of the Caliph Haroun-al-Raschid. Five miles to the north of Mihr, Jackson found on the summit of a mountain peak of the same name a ruined structure which he identified as a shrine of Mithra, the god of Truth and Light, whose name has found perpetuation in the hill and in the neighboring village. But so completely had the memory of the Mithraic or Zoroastrian rites disappeared from the memory of the inhabitants of Mihr that a Moslem priest whom Jackson interrogated a quarter of a century ago was unable to identify the position of Zoroaster in history.

Some four miles before reaching Sabzavar there stands, in lonely grandeur more than one hundred and twenty feet high, the minaret of Khowsrowgird. Acknowledged as one of the most beautiful minarets in Persia, the great cylindrical shaft, ornamented with brickwork patterns and kufic inscriptions, is a solitary memorial of a once important city. The minaret dates from 1111 A. D. when Sanjar, who later became Seljuk Sultan at Merv, was governor of Khorasan. The city of Khowsrowgird, believed to have been founded by the Sassanian Chosroes I, must have fallen into decline soon after the erection of the great minaret. No other trace of the mosque remains.

Sabzavar, or "verdure-bearing," as its name signifies, one hundred and twenty-two miles east of Shahrud, was already known in 903 A. D. as a "fine city." It, with its once important neighbor, Khowsrowgird, is of undoubted high antiquity; both have suffered the inevitable ravages of war and pillage to which all settlements in northern Khorasan have been exposed through the centuries, a danger to which all people living in the luxury of the oasis have always been exposed from the nomads of the desert.

The one important monument which has survived the depredations of Turks, Mongols, Timurids, Afghans and Turcomans is a minaret, erected about 1203 A. D. in the northern part of the city adjacent to a modern mosque. The modern town is hardly more than a century old having been rebuilt and fortified by Fath Ali Shah.

#### 5. *Nishapur and Omar Khayyam*

Seventy-five miles beyond Sabzavar over a dusty winding road from which one never loses sight of the barren ranges of the Iranian plateau lies Nishapur, once a capital of Persia, now a straggling dilapidated town of hardly twenty thousand inhabitants.

A city "whose marvels were reckoned once by dozens and multiples of dozens, a dozen mines of turquoises, of copper, of marble, a dozen water courses falling over the mountains, twelve hundred colleges, twelve hundred villages, twelve thousand kanats fed from twelve hundred sources," is for the passer-by only an inconspicuous town in an extent of desert, a few mounds and the site of the home of a few of Persia's illustrious sons.

Of all the towns and cities of Khorasan, Nishapur, or Fair City of Shapur, the Sassanian King, is probably one of the oldest. In a region every inch of which echoes the tread of historic names, Nishapur stands pre-eminent in probable age and importance. If in the Sassanian period it was already a fair city and the favorite of Shapur, it was no doubt even then respectable in age and in traditions. In 430 A. D. it was the seat of a bishopric of the Nestorian Christian Church. In the seventh century it fell, along with other cities and towns of Persia, before the conquests of the Arabs. By the ninth century it had established itself as a Moslem city of first importance. Abdullāh, the Taherid ruler (824-844), chose it as his capital in preference to Merv. Under the Seljuks it came definitely into its own when the first of the Seljuk Sultans, Togrul Beg, made the city his capital in 1038. The great Alp Arslan (1063-1072) and his successor, Malik Shah (1072-1092), continued to make Nishapur their principal seat of residence, the memory of the former being perpetuated in

the name of Tepeh Alp Arslan, or Mound of Alp Arslan, given to a ruined site in the suburbs of the present city. Great in their individual merit, nevertheless these three Seljuk sovereigns owed much of the brilliance of their reign to Nizam ol Molk, their grand vizier, one of the most celebrated statesmen whom the East has ever produced, whose fame has penetrated to the West as the friend and contemporary of Omar Khayyam.

The Seljuk Turks, the progenitors of the Ottoman Turks, were a branch of the Ghuzz Turks who, in 1029 A. D., began inroads into the north and east of Persia from their home along the Oxus in the deserts of central Asia. Their rise to power was signalized by the enthronement of Togrul Beg as Sultan in Merv in 1037 A. D. Pushed westward by the Mongol invasions of the thirteenth century, they at length established themselves in Asia Minor from whence proceeded the Ottoman Turks.

Stanley Lane-Poole in his *Mohammedan Dynasties* has emphasized the great significance of the Seljuk Turks in the history of Islam. The Seljuks found the Empire of the Caliphate disrupted into numerous scattered dynasties of Spain, Africa, northern Syria, Mesopotamia, with Persia ruled by numerous petty princes. "These rude nomads," he writes, "came to the rescue of a dying State and revived it," once more uniting Mohammedan Asia, "from the western frontier of Afghanistan to the Mediterranean, under one sovereign." He adds: "they put a new life into the expiring zeal of the Muslims, drove back the re-encroaching Byzantines, and bred up a generation of fanatical Mohammedan warriors, to whom more than anything else, the Crusaders owed their repeated failure. This it is that gives the Seljuks so important a place in Mohammedan history."

In 1221 there occurred the terrible sack of the city by the Mongols. "Thirsting for blood and plunder," according to the account of a contemporary, Yakut, the famous Arab geographer, "the invaders rushed through the various quarters of the city, razing it to the ground" to such an extent that "not a wall was left standing."

Marco Polo may have visited the city about 1272 if the place



of Sapurgan, which he mentions, was intended as a reference to Nishapur. Ibn Battuta passed through it about 1355 when he said it was called "Little Damascus" because of its beauty and the number of its fruit trees, orchards and streams. Clavijo, the Spanish Ambassador, mentions it a little later in 1404. In the next century the city was plundered by Uzbeks and in the eighteenth century laid waste by the Afghans.

It has fallen today far from the high estate which it last enjoyed under the Seljuks. Yakut, who resided there in 1216, said that with Merv and Samarcand it enjoyed the honorary title of *madinat*, or city which was the home of men of learning. Nothing of that title is left in the character of its modern inhabitants. Nothing remains as monuments of its past except what may lie underground.

In 1935 an expedition of the Metropolitan Museum of Art uncovered, when digging among the Seljuk mounds southeast of the city, a series of chambers whose walls were decorated with the elaborate stucco work in raised plaster for which that period is famous. The work, probably intended for the decoration of a tomb, is among the finest examples of Seljuk architectural designs and decoration ever found. It dates from a period roughly contemporaneous with the time when Omar Khayyam, poet, mathematician and astronomer, lived and labored in Nishapur.

If a Persian is asked in Nishapur or anywhere else in Persia for the names of the principal poets of his country he will mention without hesitation Hafiz, Sa'di and Firdausi, but he is unlikely to include the name of Omar Khayyam. Yet the *Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam* is certainly among the best known poems in the English-speaking world. And today the American and the Englishman who make their way to Nishapur are attracted not by knowledge of the fame of Nishapur as a capital of the great Seljuk power of the Middle Ages in the East but as the site of the grave of the incomparable Khayyam.

Omar Khayyam's fame would probably still be restricted to his accomplishments as a mathematician and astronomer but for the existence of Edward Fitzgerald, not only his translator but also,

it may be said with sound justice, his creator as well. He took the quatrains of Omar, or those commonly attributed to him, and by a free translation and improvisation, and an arbitrary arrangement of them, converted them into the great poem which they form today.

While Persians are never disposed to include Omar within the ranks of the first Persian poets, nevertheless, with that extraordinary pride of which they are possessed, they are never willing any the less to admit that Fitzgerald's translation is superior to the Persian of Khayyam. On a number of occasions when I took pains to question cultured Persians about Omar and had always elicited from them the admission that he was not to be compared with other Persian poets, they yet were one and all unanimous in asserting that the *Rubaiyat* in the original was superior to Fitzgerald's translation. "But how is it," I remarked, "that you can assert that a poem which, in your opinion in Persian, is only second or third rate is yet superior to a translation which is the most widely known and one of the most esteemed poems in the English language, itself one of the richest in the world in poetry?" Upon which they only shook their heads and persisted, for all the strain placed upon their habitual politeness, in maintaining their opinion.

Whatever the contribution which Omar Khayyam may have made to the quatrains now attributed to him, he well deserves the honor implicit in a pilgrimage to his tomb. Known as the "arch free thinker of his time," he may be said at least to have played a part in the deliverance of men's minds from superstitious servitudes and from the fears which have oppressed and inhibited their freedom from the earliest times.

Omar's grave is situated some four miles southeast of Nishapur. Overshadowed as his fame is in Persia by other poets, so also is his tomb subordinate to the shrine of another. There is a touch of grim humor in the presence of his sarcophagus, a simple receptacle of brick and cement without inscription, beneath an arched wing of the *imamsadeh* of a descendant of the Prophet, Mohamed Mahruk. The whole is enclosed within a typical Per-

sian garden of roses, straggling bushes and rippling watercourses, with that faint tinge of 'melancholy hanging over all Persian gardens.

Nizami, a disciple and faithful friend of Omar, visited the grave some years after the poet's death and later recorded the occasion when the great mathematician and philosopher had predicted that his grave would be situated where it might receive the fallen petals of flowers in the spring:

At Balkh in the year 506 A.H. (1112-1113 A. D.) when Omar Khayyam and Muzaffer-i Isfari had put up at the sarai of Amir Abu Sa'id in the street of the slavedealers, I joined the company, and in the midst of that social gathering I heard Omar, that Proof of Truth, say: "My grave will be in a place where every spring the north wind will scatter blossoms on me." To me this saying seemed incredible, but I knew that his like would not say anything foolish. When I came to Nishapur in the year 530 A.H. (1135-1136 A. D.)—it being fourteen years since that great soul had drawn on the veil of dust and the inferior world had become orphaned of him—I went on Friday eve to visit his tomb, seeing that he had the claim of a master on me. I took with me some one who could point out to me his grave and he took me out to the Hirah Cemetery. I turned to the left and saw that his grave lay at the end of the garden-wall. Pear-trees and peach-trees raised their heads from outside the garden; and so great a shower of blossoms was poured upon his grave that his dust was hidden beneath the flowers; and the saying occurred to me, which I had heard from him at Balkh. Thereupon I began to weep, because I saw nowhere any one like to him in all this world or in all the regions of the universe.

Alas, that Spring should vanish with the Rose!  
That Youth's sweet-scented Manuscript should close!  
The Nightingale that in the Branches sang,  
Ah, whence, and whither flown again, who knows!

*6. The Holy City of Meshed*

Meshed, capital of Khorasan and holiest city in Persia for the Shi'a Moslem, lies seventy miles beyond Nishapur almost at the borders of the Soviet Union, Persia and Afghanistan. Pilgrims from over the whole Shi'a world wend their way thither in life to earn the title of Meshedi and in death to be buried in consecrated soil within the shadow of the tomb of the eighth Imam, Ali Reza.

As the pilgrim catches sight of Meshed from afar he hastily descends from whatever beast of burden may be bearing him, whether camel, horse or donkey, and with cries of "Ya Ali! Ya Hussein! Ya Imam Reza!" drops to his knees to do reverence to the Moslem saint. Before departing from the spot he casts a stone upon the cairn already formed by the hosts who have preceded him or deposits a piece of his garments to record the occasion.

The Western world reckes little of Imam Reza but it is mindful of the great Caliph Haroun-al-Raschid who is buried in Meshed. Little does the Shi'a devotee, however, heed the memory of that Caliph, so much better known to the West than Ali Reza, as he approaches the realization of his great dream of visiting that saint's tomb. Yet Haroun-al-Raschid and Ali Reza were contemporaries.

In terms of Persian history the city of Meshed is of comparatively modern growth, owing as it does its development to its site as the burial place of the eighth Imam.

Ali Reza was born in 770 A. D., the son of the Imam Musa, succeeding to the Imamate in 800 during the reign of the Caliph Haroun-al-Raschid. In 809 the Caliph met his death in Khorasan and was buried in the village of Sanabad. Following a quarrel between his two sons to whom he had bequeathed his vast dominions the supremacy was asserted by Mamun. That Caliph conceived the bold notion of reuniting the Caliphate and the Imamate in the person of Ali Reza whom he appointed his heir. With the disaffection thereby given rise to on the part of the



Caliph's Sunni subjects Mamun is said to have administered poison to Ali Reza in 817 in a bunch of grapes.

Ali Reza was buried close by Haroun-al-Raschid near the mausoleum which had been erected by Mamun to his father's memory. However resplendent that mausoleum may once have been it is now completely overshadowed by the surpassing richness and magnificence of the shrine raised by successive Shi'a worshipers to the memory of the sainted Ali Reza.

As late as the days of Firdausi (934-1025 A. D.), Tus, the native city of that genius, was still the principal locality of the vicinity, and Meshed, which had grown up about Sanabad, only an inconspicuous town. With the destruction of Tus in 1389, however, Meshed gradually became the principal town of the region with the attraction which it offered of possessing a revered saint's tomb. The mosque erected over it which was standing in the tenth century was destroyed by Sunnis shortly after its completion.

From the second half of the tenth century the tomb of the eighth Imam was given the protection of a fortified wall. Mahmud of Ghazna (998-1030 A. D.) erected a second shrine around it but this, in turn, was destroyed. Restored by order of the Seljuk Sultan Sanjar in 1118, further additions were made in 1215 and again a century later by the first Shi'a sovereign of Persia, the Mongol Sultan Uljaitu Khodabendeh (1304-1316 A. D.). According to Monsieur Godard, it is doubtful if, aside from the funerary hall belonging to the beginning of the twelfth century, any important portions remain of the original edifice. In its actual state the great shrine represents, in the opinion of the same authority, the result of a construction activity extending from the fifteenth to the nineteenth century. During this period the embellishment of the sanctuary owed most to the son of Tamerlane, Shah Rukh, and to the Sefavid monarchs, Shah Tahmasp (1524-1576 A. D.) and Shah Abbas the Great.

With the establishment of the Shi'a religion as the national worship of Persia by the founder of the Sefavid dynasty, Shah Ismail (1502-1524 A. D.), it remained for Shah Abbas the Great

to make of Meshed the principal place of pilgrimage for Shi'a Moslems. To that end Shah Abbas made the pilgrimage on foot from Ispahan to Meshed in 1601, a panel of the frieze of the golden dome commemorating the occasion. Father Sanson, moreover, who resided in Ispahan only a few years later has written:

Shah Abbas, wishing to prevent his subjects from carrying money away from his Kingdom among the Ottomans, and to divert their pilgrimage from Mecca, promoted amongst them a great devotion for Imam Reza, one of the twelve Saints of Persia whose Tomb is at Meshed. He made this Tomb celebrated by a host of false Miracles . . . attracting to the Tomb such a great veneration that the greatest men of Persia were buried in the Mosque and bequeathed it great legacies.

There appears but little doubt that the shrine dates its great development from that monarch's time. As Shi'ism ceases to possess its original function as a political force in the development of Persia to shield Persia from the Ottoman Empire, it is symptomatic of the changed importance of Meshed that Reza Shah Pahlevi should show it small reverence. Persian soldiers fired upon a fanatical mob assembled in the shrine in the summer of 1935, to protest against the abolition of the Pahlevi hat. A few years ago such an incident might have touched the security and peace of the Shah. It is a measure of the decadence of the Shi'a priesthood that, with the secularization and Westernization of Persia under the present ruler of the country, the violence offered the sacred precincts of the shrine of Ali Reza passed without serious remonstrance or protest.

In 1355 Ibn Battuta, the great Moslem traveler from North Africa, visited Meshed and remarked, "Every Shi'a, on entering the shrine, kicks with his foot the tomb of Haroun-al-Raschid of the Sunni sect of Islam, while he invokes a blessing on that of Imam Reza." The same practice obtains to this day.

The sacred enclosure of the mosque and tomb occupies an area of perhaps a quarter of a mile in the heart of the city. As late as

the fifteenth century a Christian, Clavijo, was permitted entrance into the mosque but it has been now many years since an infidel has been granted admittance. The city of Meshed has been so often described by travelers, including Fraser, Ferrier, Eastwick, Curzon and Jackson, to name but a few of the more notable, that but little new is to be added to their descriptions.

In addition to the great shrine, the most remarkable edifices of the city include one of the noblest mosques in central Asia, the Gawhar Shah, erected by the wife of Shah Rukh. There is also a little north of the town the tomb of Khajeh Rabi, the teacher of Imam Reza, completed by Shah Abbas the Great in 1621 on the ruins of an ancient chapel. The frieze painting of the interior, designed by the celebrated painter and calligraphist, Reza Abbasi, is dated 1617. Mention should likewise be made of the Mesjid-i-Shah, in the center of the town, which was finished in 1457; the Musallah, a pious foundation constructed in 1677 in the reign of Shah Suleiman, and the *medrasseh* of Musa Safar, founded in 1650 by a Persian philanthropist who had acquired a fortune in India.

#### 7. *Tus, the Home and Tomb of Firdausi*

Tus, now only a small group of ruins scattered about a wide extent of fields, situated fifteen miles north of Meshed, was a principal city of Khorasan when Meshed was itself but an empty plain. The remains of its ancient wall, which included one hundred and six towers and nine gates, are still visible. Adjacent to one of these gates near the northeast is the monument constructed in 1934 to mark the sepulchre of one more eminent than the Imam Reza, Firdausi, one of the great epic poets of the world. The original tomb has perished long ago although traces of it existed in 1822 when Fraser saw in the neighborhood a small edifice, surmounted by a cupola ornamented with faience, which was pointed out to him as the grave of Firdausi. Even this fragmentary and fragile structure had collapsed by 1833.

Professor Jackson, the Zoroastrian scholar, derives the name of Tus from Tusa, the hero of early Iran in the tenth cen-

tury before Christ. During the Sassanian epoch Tus was of sufficient importance to mark the seat of a Nestorian Christian bishop. In 650 A. D. Tus capitulated to the conquering Arabs; in 1220 it bent before the Mongol avalanche; and only a heap of ruins remained after Tamerlane's host had swept over it a little more than a century later.

In a quatrain ascribed to Omar Khayyam that poet is said to have remarked of it:

I saw a bird perched on the walls of Tus,  
Before him lay the skull of Kai Kawus,  
And thus he made his moan, "Alas poor King!  
Thy drums are hushed, thy 'larums have rung truce."

This is not the appropriate place to give an account of the life of Firdausi, one of the immortals of his country, of whom Browne says that he ranks "not only as the greatest poet of his age, but as one of the greatest poets of all ages." One of the most delightful accounts of Firdausi is given by that catholic and eminent French critic, Sainte Beuve, in one of the *Causeries du Lundi* where it is written of him that he "who, at first sight, astonishes us" had no need to read Horace or Ovid "to say the same things as they, with the lofty consciousness of his power, and with a more poignant feeling."

Born of a small provincial family in Tus a thousand years ago Firdausi, after a lifetime of labor, completed his great epic poem, the *Shahnamah*, about 1010 A. D. at a far advanced age. He had acquired as patron the great Sultan Mahmud of Ghazna under whose dominions Khorasan was then included, and Sultan Mahmud had promised the poet a prize of twenty thousand gold dinars upon the completion of his task. When Firdausi proceeded to tender the monarch the manuscripts and to claim the reward, he was paid, not in gold as he had anticipated, but twenty thousand dirhems of silver. Concealing his disappointment he made his way to the public baths and, coming out, bought a drink of sherbet, dividing the twenty thousand dirhems between the attendant and the sherbet seller.



Returning to Herat beyond the wrath of the Sultan, he attacked Mahmud in one of the most renowned satires of the age which he added to the *Shahnameh*. A little later he returned to Tus to pass his last days with his only child, a daughter. It is recounted that Mahmud, repenting of the niggardliness shown Firdausi, dispatched a caravan to Tus laden with the twenty thousand dinars of gold which had been promised the poet. Legend has it that as the camels entered the gate of Tus with their burdens of gold for Firdausi, they encountered the funeral procession of the poet making its way to the intended tomb of that great genius. Thus the last satire with which he was concerned was written not by him but by destiny.

Persian history, as it is familiar today to Persians, is founded less on critical historical narratives than on the legends of the fabulous ages of Persia which Firdausi incorporated in his great work. Every muleteer in Iran is acquainted with legends as they were gathered by Firdausi from the story-tellers of his day. They form the sources of half the tales which are being recited tonight in the tea houses and around the caravan fires of Persians, whether of high or low estate. Rustam, Jamshid, Kaikobad, Chosroes, Shirin, Farhad, Bahram—these and other legendary and historical characters in Persian history and romance owe their fame as much to Firdausi as to historical scholarship.

#### 8. *Meshed to Teheran through the Country of the Turcomans*

Within the last two or three years there has been opened between Meshed and Teheran a motor road along the Persian-Soviet frontier through the country of the Turcomans alternative to that through Semnan, Damghan and Nishapur. The new road, which follows an old caravan trail leading from Meshed to the Caspian Sea, passes through Tus to Kuchan, and then by way of Shirvan and Bujnurd to Asterabad, whence a road leads through Ashraf and Shahi to Teheran.

Kuchan, eighty-five miles northwest of Meshed, was formerly the seat of a semi-autonomous Il-Khani, ruler of a community of

Kurdish tribesmen whom Shah Abbas the Great caused to be sent to this border region to resist the constant inroads of Tartars from the north. Under Shah Pahlevi the Il-Khani who once ruled with far-reaching authority has lost his power. Today the town is chiefly notable as the scene of the death of Nadir Shah who was born in Khorasan and met his end in the same province by assassination in 1747.

Nadir was born in 1687 "at a village or more probably in a tent, a few days' journey to the southeast of Meshed," a simple member of the Afshar tribe inhabiting the region. His rise, from the lowliest obscurity to the supreme height of power, is typical, like that of Tamerlane, and Reza Shah in our own day, of the amazing transformations attending the fortunes of men in the East. An orphan at thirteen, this future conqueror of part of India and self-made Shah was left by his father in such poverty that he was obliged to gather sticks in the woods for a living and to carry them to market on an ass. Hanway relates that, far from seeking to conceal his humble origin after he had become Shah, Nadir, on promoting a former childhood companion to a high rank, admonished him not to grow proud but to remember "the ass and the picking of sticks."

A national leader of men and a genius as a military commander, the opportunity which his restless spirit sought came to him with the collapse of the effete Sefavid power. The capture of Ispahan by the Afghans and the overrunning of the country by those wild undisciplined mountain people appeared to spell for a time the doom of Persia. Under the government of Shah Hussein and the miserable rule of the Court of that monarch, dominated by eunuchs, Persia had sunk to the shadow of itself of but a century before.

Offering his services to a son of the hapless Hussein, Shah Tahmasp II (1722-1731 A. D.), who had escaped to the Caspian provinces, Nadir proceeded from one brilliant victory to another over the Afghans. At length in 1736 after the death of Shah Tahmasp and after Nadir had put to death Tahmasp's heir, he was enthroned as Shah after the army had agreed to the three

conditions made by him incident to his acceptance of power. These included the making of the crown hereditary in his family, the renunciation by the nation of the Sefavid dynasty and the abandonment of the Shi'a creed as the national religion of Persia. The imposition of this last condition by Nadir Shah, one of the great contributing causes of his subsequent downfall, doubtless proceeded from his attachment to the Sunnite faith in which he had been born.

Having penetrated India in a triumphal progress, after freeing Persia of the Afghans, Nadir sacked Delhi, bore off eighty million pounds sterling in treasure from that city, including the Peacock Throne, and returned to Persia to meet his death at the hands of his own victorious soldiers.

Beyond Kuchan the next important town is Shirvan, forty-two miles away, and beyond Shirvan, Bujnurd, an equal distance, our destination for the day. Between the two towns, which lie wholly within the Turcoman country, the Mongolian two-humped camel is frequently met with, while the slanting eyes and the straight black hair of the Turcomans offer an indubitable suggestion of the Mongolian origin of the inhabitants.

O'Donovan, the intrepid British correspondent, who journeyed in these regions half a century ago, passing several months with the Turcoman tribes, has left, along with Wolff, Fraser and Baker, an unforgettable account of their ways. The present Persian Turcomans, divided into two tribes, the Yamut and the Guklan, like other once free and independent tribes of Persia, have fallen on evil days. If they have retained a greater freedom of movement and suffer perhaps less interference than the Kurds, the Lurs, the Kashgais and the Bakhtiaris, it is owing to their presence almost astride the Soviet-Persian border and their ability to escape so readily Persian authority by passing the frontier.

### 9. *Bujnurd to Asterabad*

From Bujnurd to Asterabad is a long day's journey of two hundred and twenty miles, for the greater part of the way over an uncultivated country virtually devoid of settled habitations.

At remote intervals near the road are small villages of Turcoman huts, the upright sides of tall reeds and with a circular crown of felt. For miles the country is covered with a vast tundra with grass growing waist high, another indication of the great variety of soil and scenery for which Persia is notable.

At length in the late afternoon, sixty miles east of Asterabad, there looms over the horizon in the distance one of the most famous monuments of the world, the ten-sided brick tower of Kabus. The oldest dated Islamic edifice in Persia (997 A. D.), the tower, of an outer circumference of two hundred and ten feet and of a height of one hundred and sixty-eight feet, has been built on a mound which is itself forty feet in height. Accordingly, the elevation of the structure from the level plain is equal to its circumference. The monument bears an inscription, which being translated reads: "In the name of God the Merciful, the Compassionate. This lofty grave was built by the orders of Shams-ul-Ma'ali, Amir son of the Amir, Kabus son of Washmgir. He ordered it to be built during his lifetime" (997 A. D.). Within it was suspended in a glass coffin the body of Kabus after his death.

With the decline of the Caliphate in Baghdad there arose in the east of Persia and central Asia, five notable dynasties, that of Sultan Mahmud of Ghazna in Afghanistan, the Samanid Court at Bokhara, the Khwarizmshahs at Khiva, the Buwayhid dynasty at Ispahan and Ray, and that of the Ziyarids (928-1042 A. D.) at Gorgan in Tabaristan. With Kabus, Amir or Sultan of Tabaristan (976-1012 A. D.), a poet of note, the Ziyarid dynasty entered upon a brilliant if brief career. That ruler, a descendant of the Sassanian line, and well versed in philosophy and astronomy, united with these virtues a cruel and suspicious nature. His virtues and his faults, having been weighed in the balance by his subjects, finally resulted in his murder at their hands.

His grandson, Kai-Ka-us, composed for his son in 1082 A. D. the *Kabus-Namch*, a remarkable book of moral precepts and rules of conduct possessing a universal appeal. Thus, caution is



uttered against making statements which, although true, are difficult of proof and likely to be disbelieved, for, remarks the author, "why should one make a statement, even if it be true, which it needs four months and the testimony of two hundred respectable witnesses to prove?" The advantages of a smooth tongue are dwelt upon, as well as the drawbacks of an excessive modesty.

Concerning hospitality it is observed that a host should never apologize to his guests for the entertainment offered them, as it only makes them ill at ease. Of spirituous liquors, the son is advised not to drink in the morning and to get drunk in his own house in order to avoid scandal. It is observed that: "To drink wine is a sin, and if you must sin, let it at least be pleasantly and gracefully. So let the wine you drink be of the best, and likewise the music to which you listen; and if you jest with any one, do it well, so that, if you are to be punished in the next world, you may at least not be blamed and censured in this."

The Gunbad-i-Kabus, or Tower of Kabus, as it is known, is two miles northeast of the ruins of the formerly important town of Gurgan, the capital of the province of the same name which comprised, with ancient Hyrcania, the Vehrakana of the Avesta. In the tenth century Ibn Hawkal described Gurgan as a fine town nearly as large as Ray, with handsome mosques and markets. In the fourteenth century the town was already in ruins from the Mongol invasion and is now represented by only an extensive group of mounds.

Some fifteen to twenty miles before reaching Asterabad there is passed before entering Pahlevi-Diz or Ak-Kalieh the Kizil Alan wall erected by Alexander the Great for protection against the tribes from the east. It was rebuilt by Chosroes I and consisted apparently of a deep moat and a solid wall of masonry with watch towers at regular intervals. Nothing now remains of it other than a low embankment and an occasional mound.

Asterabad, a picturesque town, built on an eminence, commands a view of the vast Turcoman plain which lies behind us, the Caspian Sea some distance to the north and the jungles of the Elburz

Mountains to the south which loom ahead on the way to Teheran.

The town was once constantly exposed to the depredations of marauding Turcomans. Eastwick, of the British Legation in Teheran, who visited Asterabad in 1861, saw stuffed with straw forty-one heads of Turcomans who had been taken prisoners and executed. He reported also that a slave trade in Turcomans went on briskly in the town.

From Asterabad the return to Teheran is made by way of Ashraf, Shahi and Firouzkuh across the mountains to the Persian plateau. Khorasan, which has borne on its northern extremities through the ages the brunt of ceaseless overflowings of invasion from the racial cauldron of Asia, lies behind. The pilgrim road to Meshed, that most sacred place of pilgrimage for Shi'a Moslems, has long receded in the distance. Before resuming our travels which will take us to northwestern Persia, including Ardebil, where Shi'ism as the national religion of Persia had its rise, let us examine for a moment the basis of a sect which represents so peculiar an adaptation of Islam by the Persians to meet the highly individual characteristics of their race. For Shi'ism offers to an unusual degree as a religion a key to an understanding of Persian character and of Persian national development.

## CHAPTER VII

### RELIGIONS IN PERSIA AFTER ZOROASTER

#### *1. The Shi'a Religion*

THE religion of a people, it has been suggested, is the supreme collective expression of a community's view of man's place in the universe. No better evidence could perhaps be found in support of such a statement than that offered by the national faith of Persia, Shi'ism, one of the two great divisions of Islam. It is a measure, however, of the tenacious strength of the indigenous Persian culture that the Moslem religion, as forced upon Persia by the Arab Conquest in 641 A. D. was, in the end, transformed into tenets conformable with the Persian spirit and widely differing from the orthodox faith of Islam, of which the Sunni sect became the embodiment and of which the Sunni Caliphs came to represent the supreme heads.

The Shi'a faith did not become the national religion of Persia until the time of Shah Ismail, founder of the Sefavid dynasty. But Mohammed's death in 632 A. D. had hardly taken place before the seeds of the division between the Shi'as, the partisans of Ali, son-in-law of the Prophet, and the Sunnis, had been sown.

The great issue immediately presented by the death of the Prophet was that of his successor. Mohammed had left no male issue but had two grandsons, Hassan and Hussein, the sons of the Prophet's daughter Fatima by Ali. The question at once raised was whether the Prophet had intended that his successor should be elected in a free assembly of the tribal leaders or whether he had designated his son-in-law, Ali, as his viceregent, in anticipation that such succession should pass thence to the latter's eldest son and be thus perpetuated.

For the Arabs of Mecca and Medina, paramount in the councils of Islam at this time, the issue was clear. Imbued through cen-

turies with the democratic traditions of the desert, the elective principle accorded entirely with their age-old tribal customs. Accordingly, Abu Bekr, father-in law of Mohammed, was chosen caliph and, upon his death in 634 A. D., Omar, likewise a father-in-law of the Prophet, was selected to succeed him.

At the time of the accession of Abu Bekr, Islam comprised no territories beyond Arabia. Under Omar (634-644 A. D.) the power of Islam was extended over Syria, Mesopotamia, Egypt and eventually over Persia with the overthrow in 641 A. D. at the decisive battle of Nihavend of Yezdigird III (634-641 A. D.), last of the Sassanian kings. Othman (644-656 A. D.), son-in-law of Mohammed, succeeded Omar in the Caliphate and it was not until 656 A. D. that Ali, whose partisans bitterly resented his being passed over in favor of Abu Bekr, Omar and Othman, finally succeeded to the supreme authority over Islam.

By then the Shi'at Ali, or followers of Ali, had been powerfully reinforced by elements within the body of Islam which adhered to this legitimate doctrine of the divine right of succession. These last found thoroughly repugnant to their traditions the notion of an elective theory to regulate the succession of the Prophet. Such, in particular, were the Persians. Besides their natural predilection for the divine right principle, the Persian Shi'ites were powerfully influenced in their attachment to the House of Ali by two not inconsiderable prejudices. Omar, who had subdued Persia and who had overthrown the House of Sassan, could only be an object of execration to Persians who had witnessed the overrunning of their territory, the overthrow of their Zoroastrian faith and the infringement in these and other ways of their ancient culture by the rude desert nomads of Arabia.

Moreover, there was a strongly positive compelling motive for the prejudice of Persians in favor of Ali. Hussein, younger son of the former, was said to have married Shahr-banu, a daughter of Yezdigird III, and thus in Ali's issue through Hussein there were mingled the blood of the Prophet Mohammed and that of the last monarch of the House of Sassan which had reigned over Persia for more than four hundred years.



The disaffection engendered by this dispute over the succession became irremediably intensified with the murder of Ali in 661 A. D. after he had exercised an attenuated and brief leadership over Islam. Nejef, his reputed place of burial in Iraq, subsequently became one of the great places of pilgrimage for Shi'a Moslems while, among at least one sect of the Shi'as, the Aliullahis, Ali's divine attributes have become so magnified that his fame has tended to overshadow even the Prophet Mohammed's.

For an adequate appreciation of the divisions which followed the death of Ali a brief explanation is required of the family or tribal relationships out of which those divisions developed. For years the pagan pre-Islamic shrine of the Kaaba at Mecca had been in the custody of the Kureish tribe, paramount in authority there. This tribe, as a result of differences, split into the Hashimites and the Omayyad factions, the latter removing to Syria. To the Hashimites there belonged both the father of Mohammed, the father of Ali and the uncle of Mohammed, Abbas.

With the elevation of Ali to the Caliphate, Muavia, a member of the Omayyad faction, who had been named by the Caliph Omar as governor of Syria, rose in rebellion upon being dismissed from his post. Muavia, thereupon, in opposition to Ali, proclaimed himself caliph, founding the branch of Omayyad Caliphs who ruled the world of Islam from Damascus until 750 A. D. for close on a century.

Upon the usurpation of the Caliphate by Muavia and following the death of Ali, the latter's eldest son, Hassan, was proclaimed caliph by the followers of Ali, the Shi'as. Hassan, a weakling, quickly abdicated in face of the threats of Muavia and compounded with the latter for a life of ease and quiet.

With the death of Muavia in 680 A. D. and his succession by his son, Yezid, Hussein, younger brother of Hassan, and son of Ali, was pressed by the adherents of Ali at Kufa in Iraq to assert his rights to the Caliphate, being promised their support, and urged to make his way from Mecca to Kufa to head the rebellion.

The rising, as the eminent scholar Noldecke has observed, "like most others that proceeded from the family of Ali, was begun

and carried on in a headless way, and was suppressed with little trouble." He adds: "To all appearance it was an affair of absolutely no consequence; but the way in which men regard a matter is often more important than the matter itself."

The party of Hussein, consisting of thirty armed men on horse and forty on foot, accompanied by their women and children, set off across the desert for Kufa, confident in the success of their undertaking. Outside that city, where meanwhile the supporters of Hussein had lost enthusiasm for his cause, the little band of fanatical followers of Ali's son was attacked on the tenth day of the month of Moharrem. Fighting desperately, with no water, the seventy refused to surrender and were cut down one by one until only the women and children were left. The heads of the fallen having been carried in triumph to the Governor of Kufa, the latter callously turned that of Hussein over with his staff as it lay in the dust before a curious throng. Not all sense of loyalty to Hussein, however, was absent, for an aged Arab muttered reproachfully, "Gently; it is the grandson of the Prophet. By Allah! I have seen these very lips kissed by the blessed mouth of Mohammed."

Thus perished Hussein, son of Ali, grandson of the Prophet, husband of a daughter of the last of the Sassanian kings, and the last of the family of Ali to endeavor during many years to assert a right to the temporal leadership of Islam. The tragic circumstances of Hussein's death which have evoked a sympathy in intellects so divergent as those of Gibbon, Macaulay and Matthew Arnold, have contributed that essentially emotional factor from which the Shi'a sect of Islam has drawn strength through the intervening centuries. Hussein's martyrdom has become the Passion of the Shi'a world.

On the plain where the tragedy attending Hussein occurred a city, Kerbela, has grown up around his shrine. Here, in life, the Shi'as perform their pilgrimages, and here, in death, they make provision whenever possible, to be buried. The tragedy has been immortalized, moreover, in the so-called *tasiyehs*, or plays which, until recently were enacted in Persia and in the Shi'a world

during the first ten days of Moharrem in commemoration of the circumstances of the fate of Hussein. Further, the tenth day of Moharrem, known as Ashura, the anniversary of Hussein's death, until very recently has been commemorated by public processions of the most fanatical Shi'as. Until put an end to by the Persian Government in the last year or two the day has been marked by parades through the streets of mourners in the act of beating their breasts or practicing the most cruel self-mutilations with knives and swords, while crying, "Ya, Hassan; Ya, Hussein; Ya, Allah."

Although Hussein's son, Ali Zein-ol-Abeydin, made no further pretensions to the leadership of Islam, the Shi'as came to look upon Ali and his descendants in the eldest male line from Hussein as the only lawful heads of the faith. Accordingly, the first caliphs, Abu Bekr, Omar and Othman, are regarded as unlawful usurpers and their names are anathematized in the prayers of the Shi'as. For the Shi'as the only lawful imams, or leaders, of Islam after the death of the Prophet are Ali, the fourth Caliph; his sons, Hassan and Hussein; and the descendants of Hussein to the twelfth Imam.

The development of this schism resulted eventually in the formation of the two great branches of Islam: the Sunnis, or orthodox followers of the Caliph, and the Shi'as, the partisans or followers of Ali and his descendants. Before this schism had become hard and fast, however, there had developed under the Omayyad Caliphate (661-750 A. D.) a schismatic movement led by the followers of the House of Abbas, uncle of Mohammed, who had become disaffected toward the Omayyads and who, accordingly, undertook to make allies of the followers of the House of Ali.

These Abbasids, as they became known, had their center a little to the south of the Dead Sea in a region which commanded the pilgrim route through Syria to Mecca. Here they mingled with the pilgrim caravans from the farthest reaches of Islam and in making themselves acquainted with the varying temper of Islamic public opinion they became apprised of the extreme disaffection

of the Persian followers of the House of Ali toward the growing oppression of the Omayyad Caliphate in Damascus. As observed by Noldecke, the Abbasids had the genius to perceive that the best soil for their efforts was the distant Khorasan in northeast Persia. Taking advantage of the disaffection already aroused by the subordinate position in which they were held, contrary to the Koran, by the Omayyad Caliphate, the inhabitants of Khorasan were further incited by the Abbasids against the Omayyads by the plea of the illegitimacy of the Omayyad succession. For a time the Persians were deceived into thinking that the Abbasids meant to make common cause with them in the restoration to the Caliphate of the House of Ali. But "gradually and furtively," in the words of Noldecke, the claims of the House of Abbas were substituted for those of the descendants of Ali, it being represented finally in behalf of the branch of Abbas that, since descent from Mohammed in the female line through Fatima was only through a woman, the relationship to Mohammed through Abbas, the Prophet's uncle, carried a clearer title than that through Ali.

Having stirred up the Persian troops in Khorasan to revolt, the Abbasids, placing themselves at the head of the rebellion, after a severe struggle overthrew in 750 A. D. the Omayyads in Damascus. Saffah, fourth in descent from Abbas, or Abul Abbas as he is also known, was proclaimed first of the Abbasid Caliphs, and under his successor, Mansur, the seat of the Caliphate was transferred in 762 A. D. to Baghdad where it continued to be maintained for some five hundred years.

Under the great Haroun-al-Raschid, who was born in Persia at Ray and who is buried in Meshed, the Abbasid Caliphate attained its zenith. After his death it fell into a long decline during which its power came to be challenged by a number of short-lived Persian dynasties, which inclined toward Shi'ism, notably the Saffarids and the Buwayhids, until its seat of authority at Baghdad was sacked and its power terminated there in 1258 A. D. by the Mongol, Hulagu Khan.

By a Persian wife, the Caliph Haroun-al-Raschid had a son, Mamun, whom he greatly favored, so much so, in fact, that by



his will, which recognized the right of his eldest son, Amin, to the Caliphate, Haroun left the eastern provinces of his empire, including Khorasan, to Mamun, with Merv as his capital. It was hardly to be expected that such a division of authority would remain permanent. Upon the death of their father near Meshed in 786 A. D. to which he had gone to suppress a rebellion, Mamun announced his recognition of Amin as Caliph, but the latter ignored the provisions of his father's will in favor of Mamun. As a result Mamun revolted and, with the aid of Persian troops in Khorasan, captured Baghdad and put his brother to death.

Whereupon, "as a master stroke of diplomacy," Mamun "arrived at the decision to attempt to conciliate the Shi'ites by designating their Imam as his successor to the Caliphate" (Donaldson). This was Ali Reza, eighth Imam, and fifth in descent from Hussein. Ali Reza was accordingly officially named as Mamun's heir apparent, his name being included with that of the Caliph's on coins. The Arab party, however, revolted, and Mamun, in the effort to conciliate them, caused the hapless Ali Reza to be poisoned. In the end Mamun himself was unable to ride out the storm, being put to death in 809 A. D.

The next important development in the genesis of the Shi'a faith in Persia was that incident to the romantic ascent to power of the Saffarid Persian dynasty (867-903 A. D.) in eastern Persia under Yakub, the Saffar, or Coppersmith. The rise of Yakub is an epitome of the history of many men in Persia from obscurity to fame. Promoted by a freak of fortune from the leadership of a band of outlaws to a position of trust at the Court of the Caliph's governor of the Province of Seistan, Yakub usurped the post of governor and proceeded on a career of conquest which only ended after he had made himself master of practically all of Persia. The dynasty to which he gave his name quickly succumbed shortly after his death in 878 A. D., but it is significant as the first challenge offered on any comparable scale on the part of Persia to the overlordship of the caliphs. Yakub had, it is interesting to note, strong Shi'a proclivities and if his short-lived dynasty did nothing else it at least, as Noldecke has said, "suc-

ceeded in reviving the national life of Persia, and in detaching its history definitely from that of the Abbasid metropolis."

It is of the highest significance, moreover, that the second challenge of the fast declining power of the Caliphate emanated from a local Persian dynasty, the Buwayhids (932-1055 A. D.) which sympathized with the Shi'as. It extended its power over southern and western Persia to Iraq and Baghdad where the caliphs became mere puppets in its hands.

My friend, Mr. H. L. Rabino, who has continued the traditions of high scholarship in the British Consular Service of Sir Richard F. Burton, has noted that it was in Baghdad during the Buwayhid political domination, or in 963 A. D. to be exact, that there was instituted the period of mourning during the first ten days of Moharrem for the Shi'a martyrs, Hassan and Hussein. Professor Browne considered that the dramatic representations of the tragedy of Kerbela, however, which have in late years distinguished throughout Persia the commemoration of the ten mourning days, are a development dating only from the late eighteenth or early nineteenth centuries under the stimulus given the growth of Shi'ism by the Sefavids.

As Islam developed into two great separate religious bodies of Sunnis and Shi'as after the death of the Prophet, so at a very early date schismatic movements developed out of the Shi'a faith into what are commonly known as the Seveners and Twelvers. The occasion for the first great schism in Shi'ism grew out of a dispute over recognition of the seventh Imam, Jafar, the sixth Imam, who died in 765 A. D. having withdrawn recognition as imam from his eldest son, Ismail, in favor of his younger son, Musa. Notwithstanding that Ismail died in the lifetime of his father, the sect of the Ismailis, who recognized Ismail's son, Mohammed, as the seventh and last imam, separated themselves from the Shi'as who adhered to recognition of Musa, Ismail's younger brother, as the rightful imam. Inasmuch as, shortly thereafter, the Imamate of even the orthodox Shi'as terminated with the twelfth Imam, Mohammed Mahdi, who died in 873 A. D., the two principal sects of the Shi'as came to be known as the Seveners

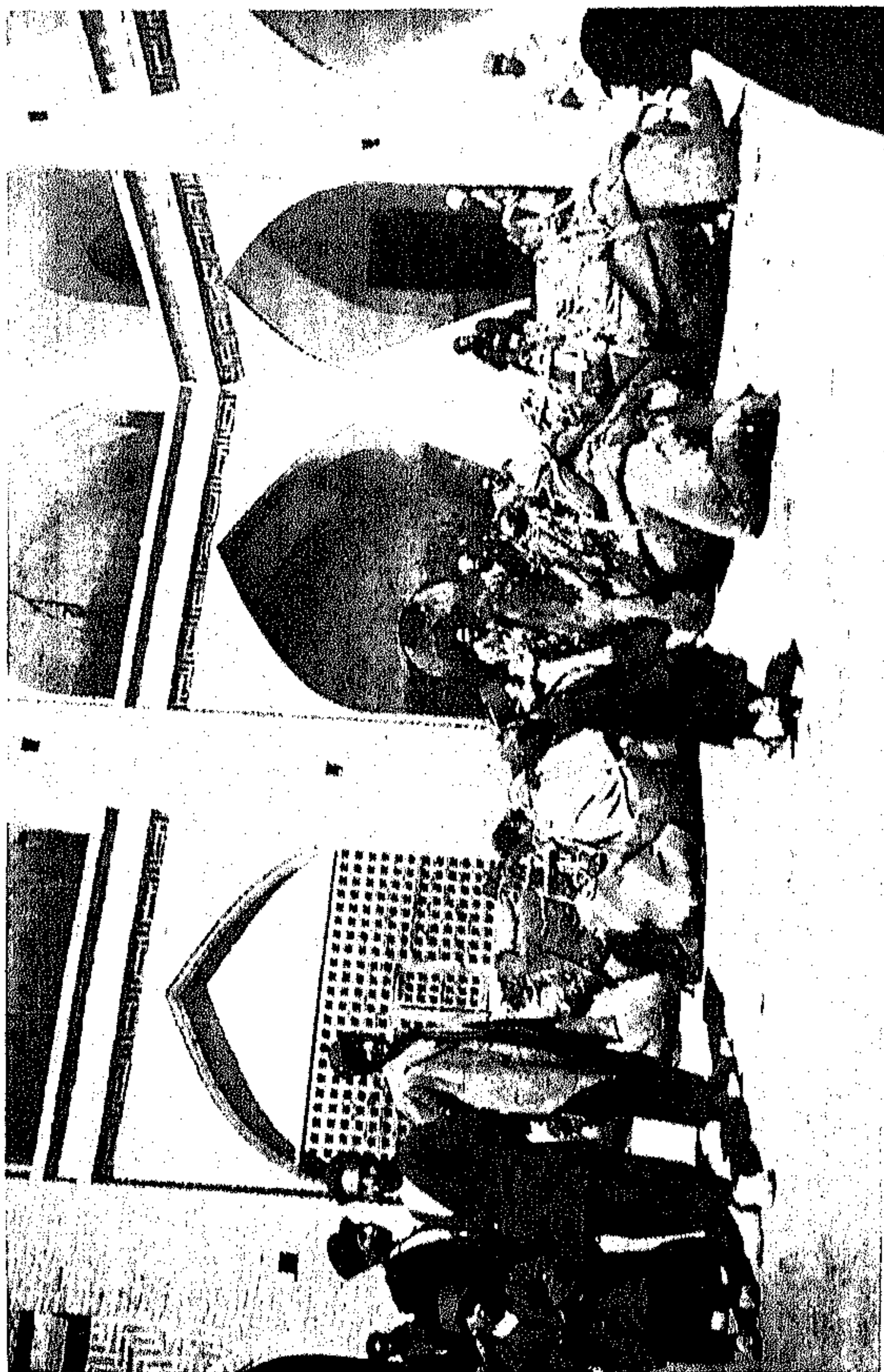


Façade of caravanserai at Kashan



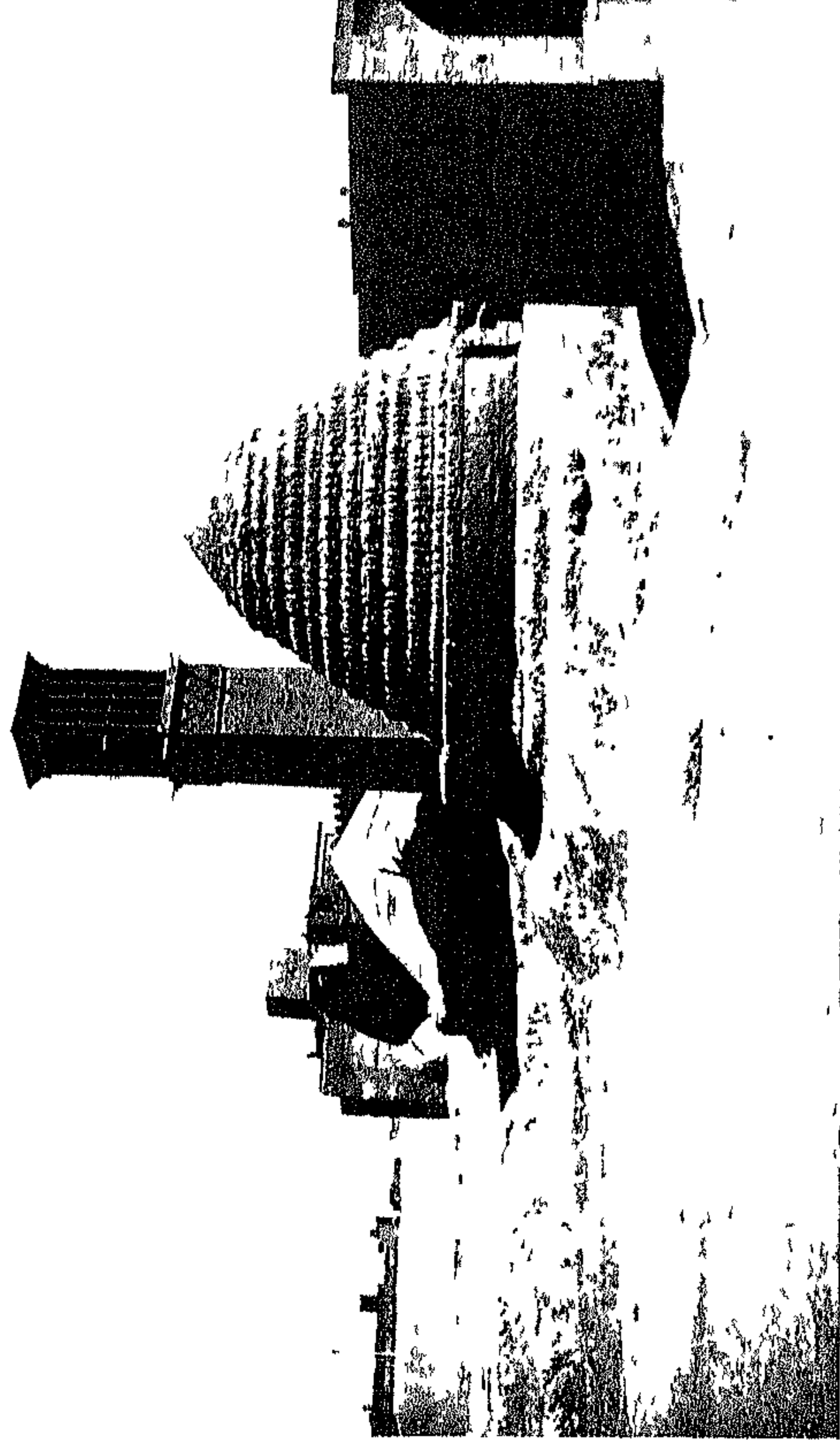
Citadel of Akda between Nain and Yazd



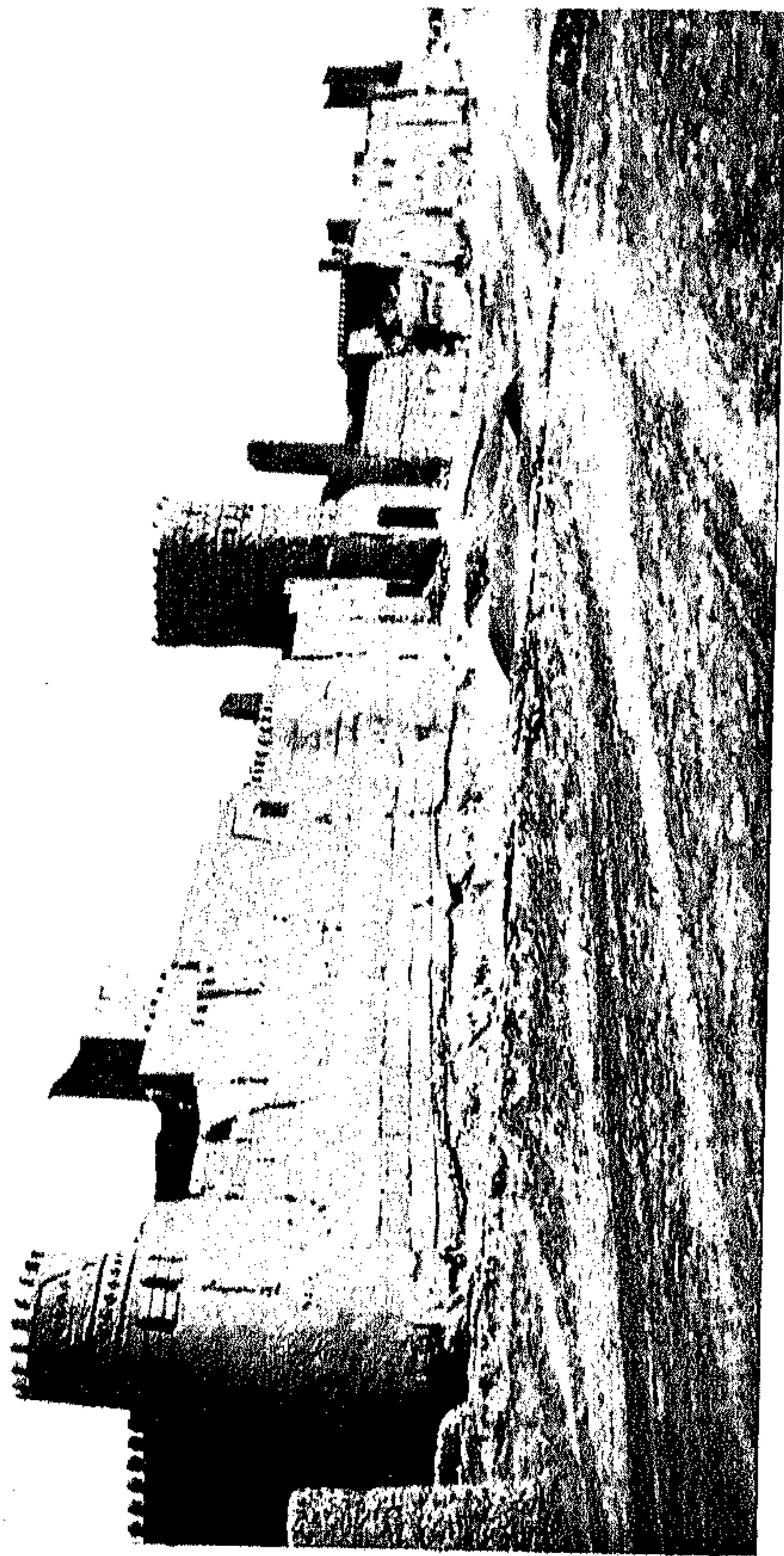


Caravanserai, Nain

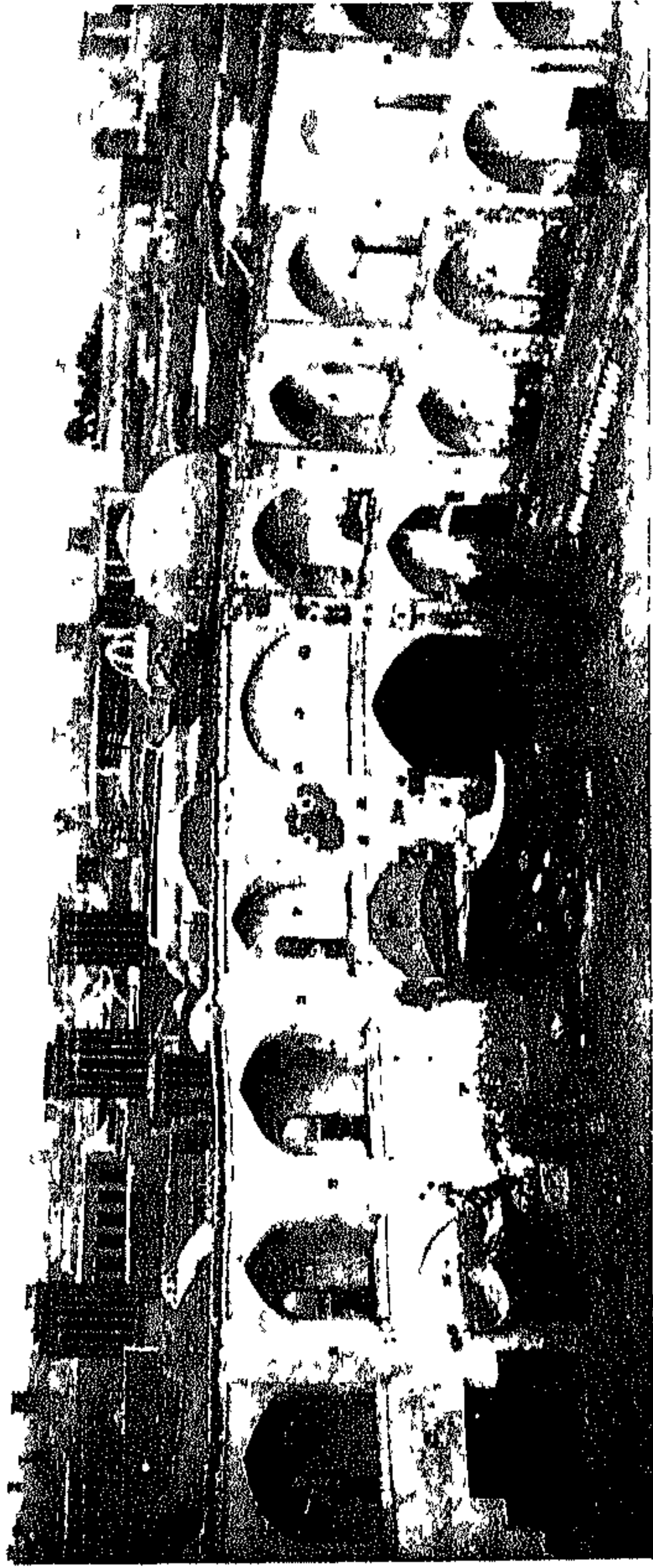




Wind tower and *abambar* for the cooling of water, Nain

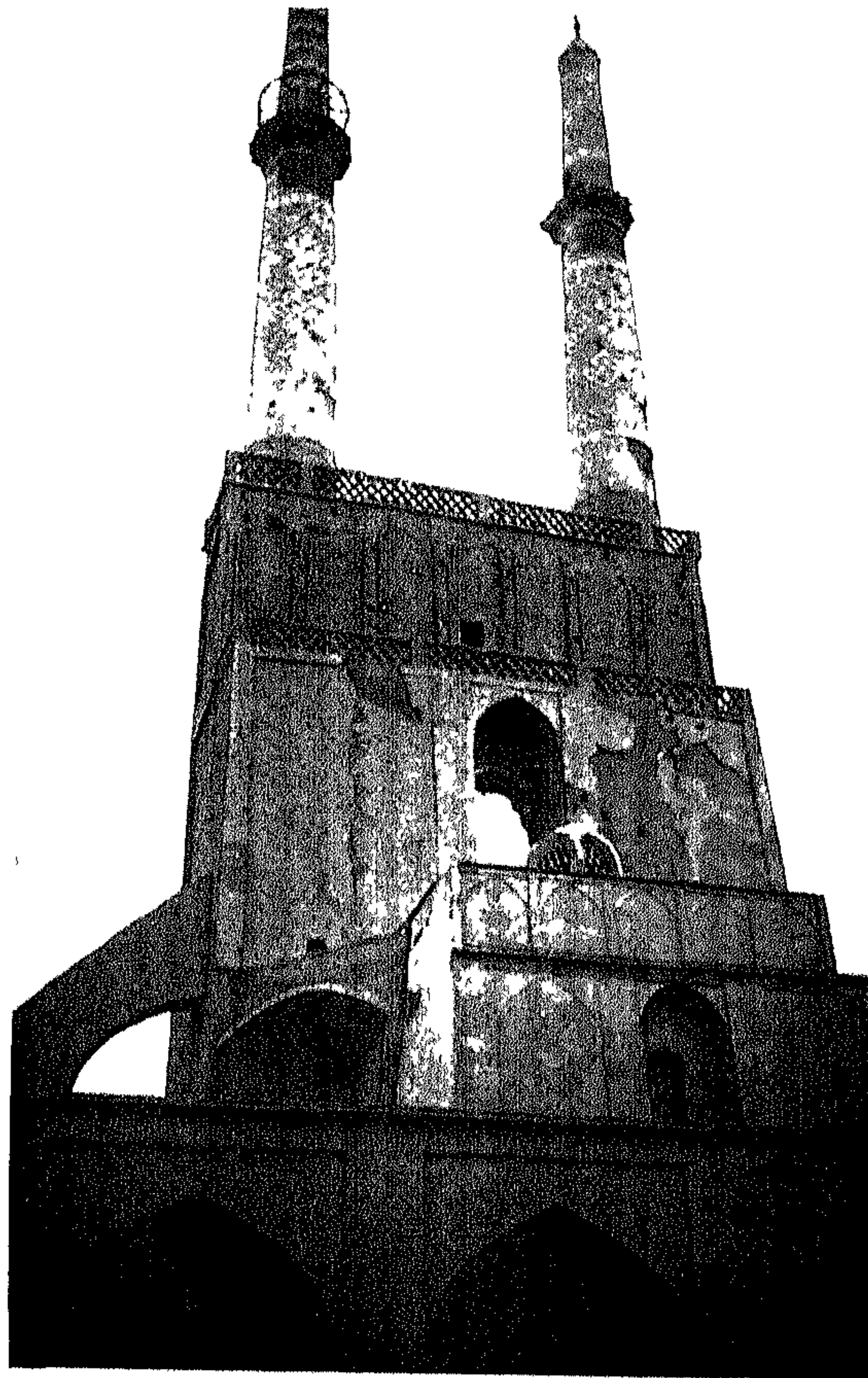


Walled village of Ardekan near Yazd



Skyline of Yazd  
In the foreground is a caravanserai





Minarets of Yazd Mosque





Tea and eggs for the traveler, near Yezd



Zoroastrian temple, Yazd



Bazaar of Kerman



Entrance to bazaars, Kerman



The shrine of Mahun  
Lying in solitary remoteness on the edge of the Kerman Desert, one of  
the most strikingly beautiful monuments in Persia

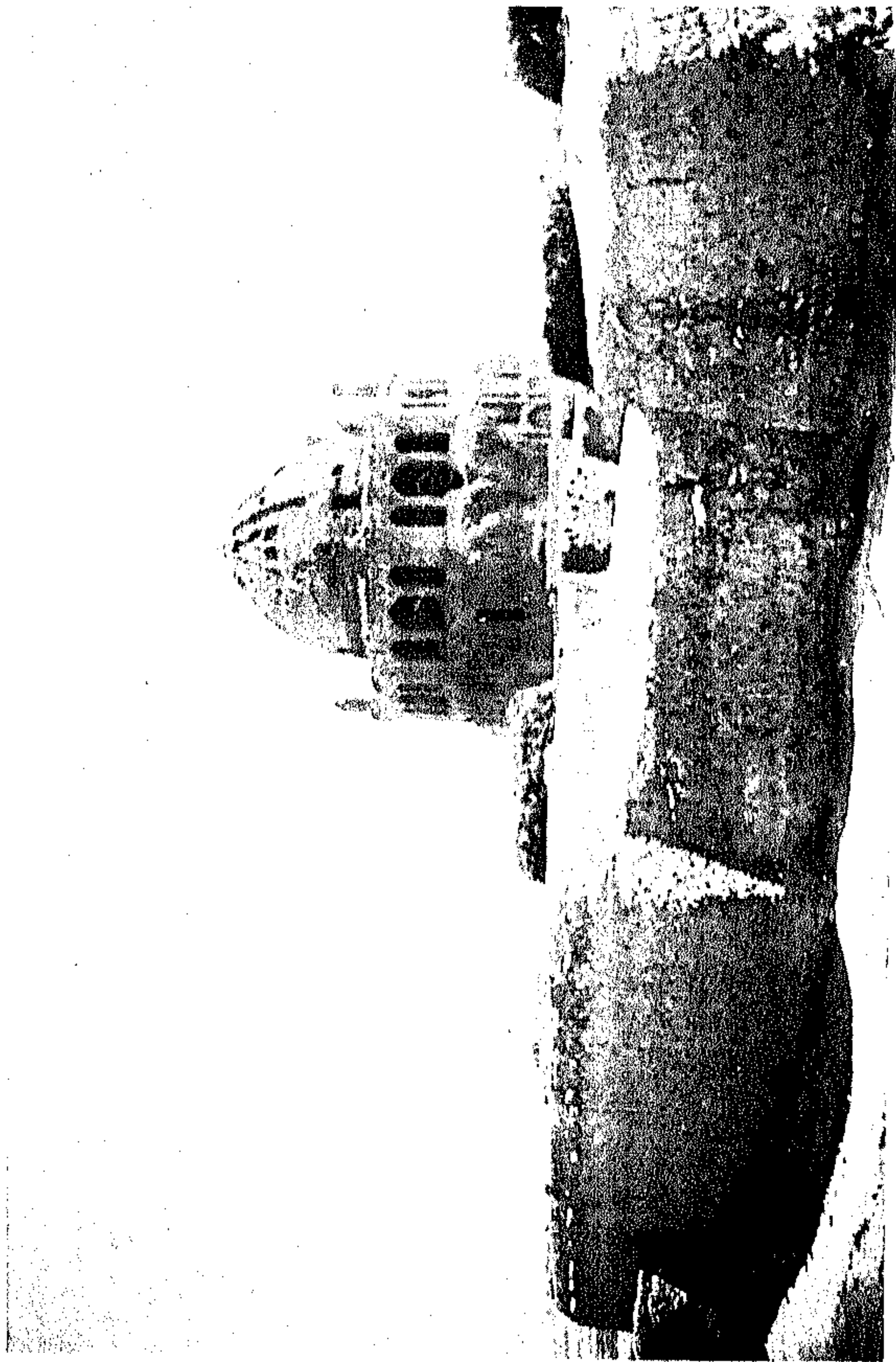




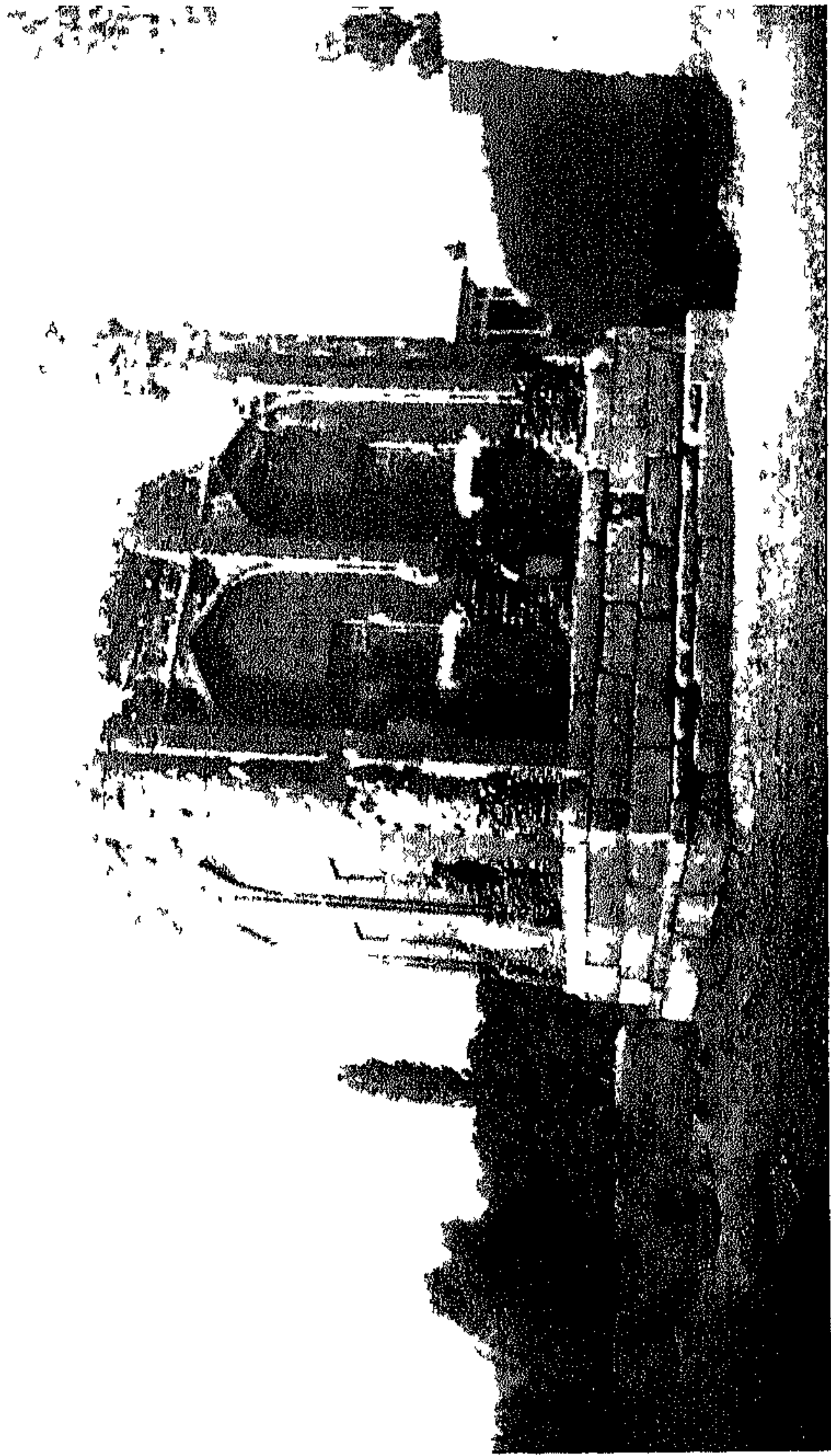
Persian village near Teheran



Kai-Buraj (fourteenth century)  
at Maragha



Tomb of Khodabنده, Sultaniya



Gunbad-i-Gaffaraya  
Mongolian Tomb of the fourteenth century at Maragha



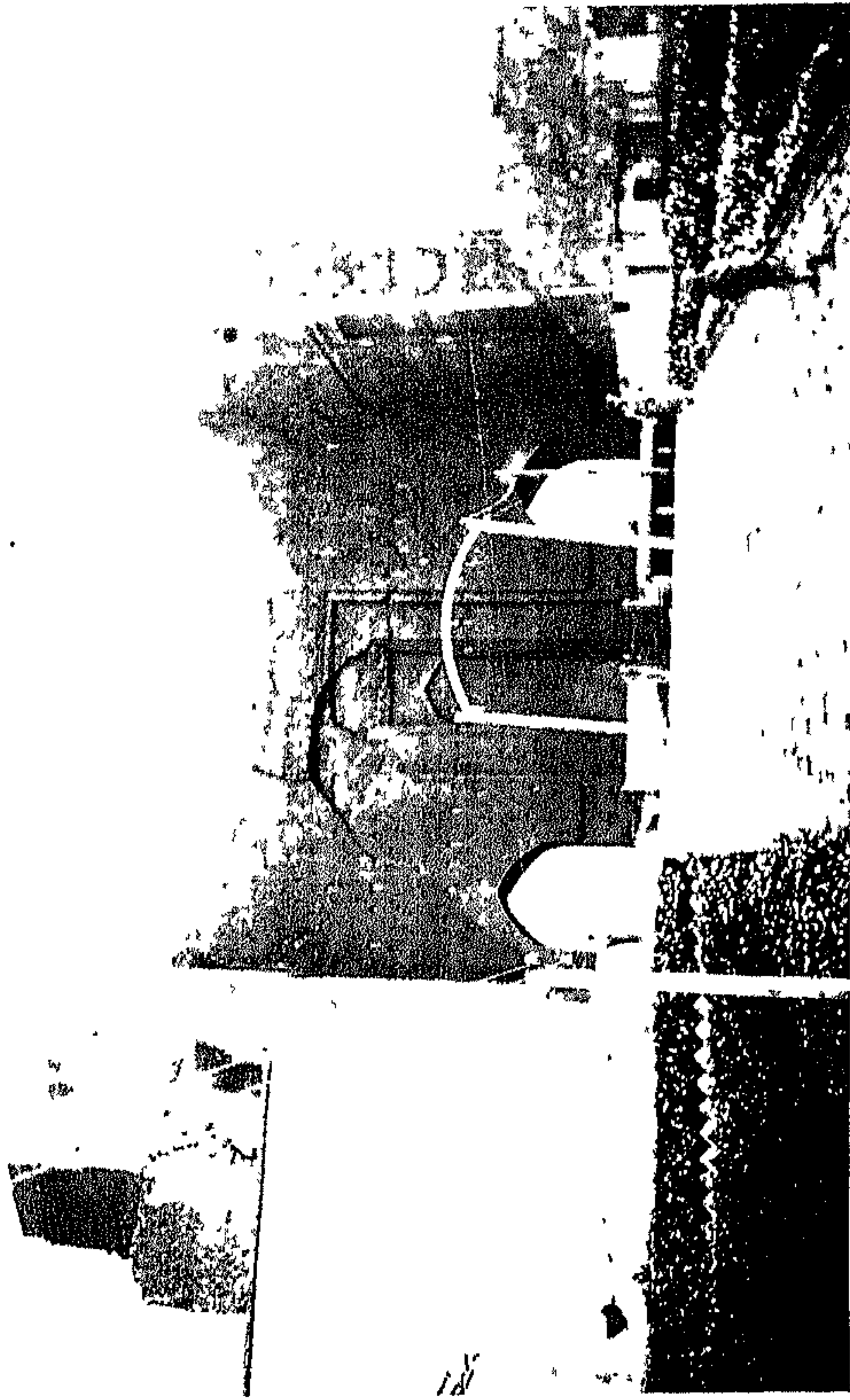


A street in Mangha

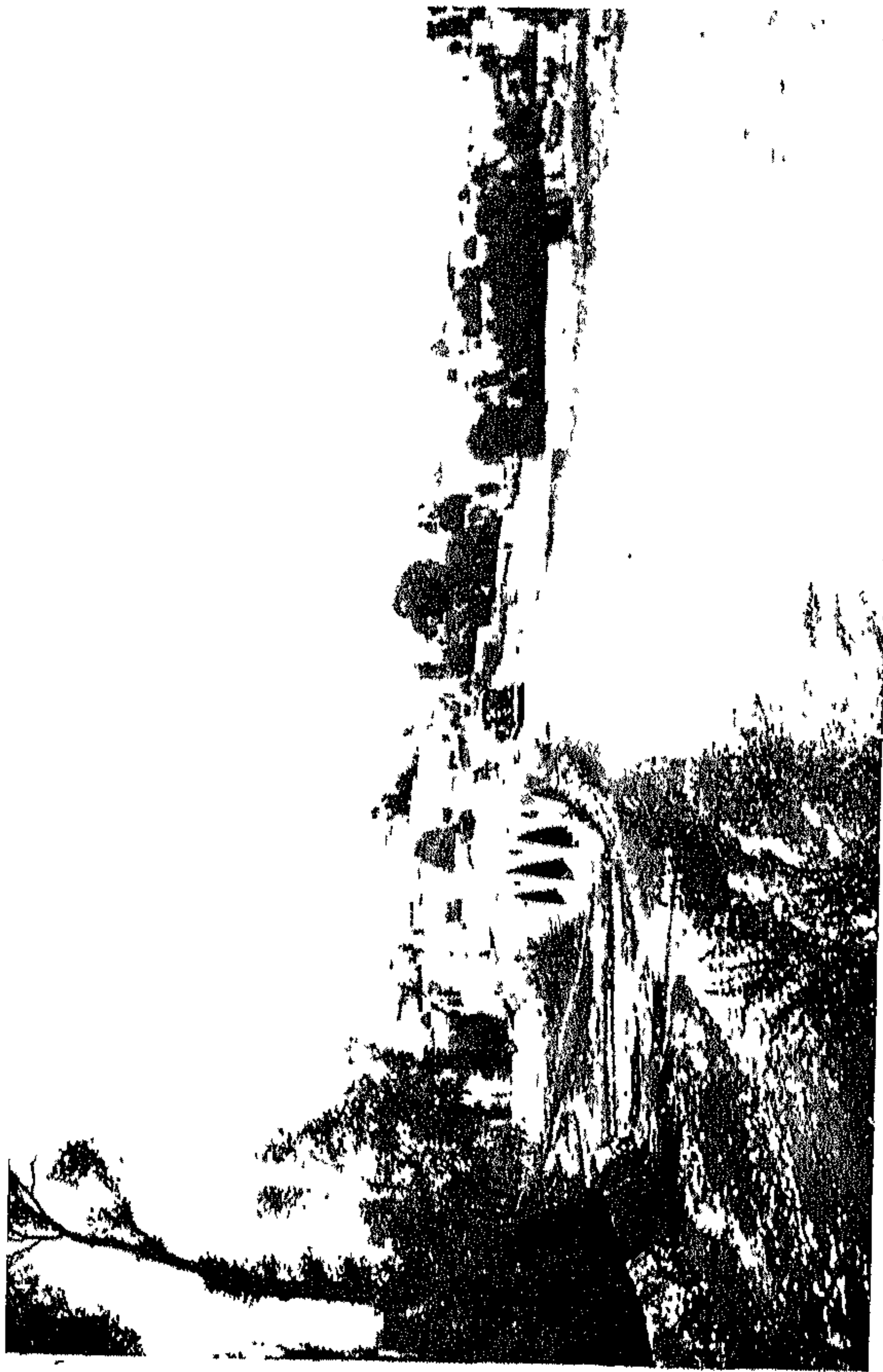


Tabriz





Remains of citadel, Tabriz



Village of Nair between Tabriz and Ardebil

and Twelvers. The Twelvers, or original Shi'ites, believe that the twelfth Imam did not die but only withdrew himself from this world and that he is destined to re-emerge and to reveal himself as the world's deliverer, or Mahdi.

The Seveners eventually almost completely modified the tenets of Islam. Not only did they come to regard Ali and the imams as reincarnations of God, but they held to the doctrine of metempsychosis or the return incarnation and embodied likewise in their beliefs esoteric ideas of the neo-Platonists, the neo-Pythagoreans and even of the old Semites. To the number seven, moreover, there came to be attributed a mystic character.

From the Seveners or Ismailis there developed the Fatimid dynasty of Egypt (909-1171 A. D.) and the so-called Assassins of Persia and the Middle East, of whom the Druzes in Syria and the Aga Khan in India are modern representatives. The Assassins, who gained their name from their use of hashish to drug the instruments of their deeds, found a leader in Persia in Hassan Sabbah, apocryphal friend of Omar Khayyam. Under Hassan Sabbah's direction an impregnable fortress was established in 1090 at Alamut in the Elburz Mountains northeast of Kazvin, and others in many other parts of Persia to the number of perhaps a hundred. With himself as Grand Master of the Order and with a hierarchy of subordinate officers, comprising Grand Priors, Companions, Adherents and Devotees, the Assassins made their power felt throughout Persia during the disturbing times when the power of the Caliphate at Baghdad was disintegrating and when it was passing to local centers of authority. The classic and almost contemporary account of the Assassins and of their head, the Old Man of the Mountains, as he was popularly termed, is given by Marco Polo who traveled close to Alamut in Persia only a few years after Alamut and other strongholds of the Assassins had been reduced by the Mongols.

With the breaking of the power of the Assassins and the sack of Baghdad by Hulagu Khan in 1258 A. D., the rulers of Persia, the Mongol Il-Khans, who were originally Buddhists or pagans, favored for a time Christianity rather than Mohammedanism.

The Caliphate was installed in Cairo where the caliph enjoyed a precarious existence in the face of continual Mongol inroads into Syria and Palestine. It was not until Ghazan Khan (1295-1304 A. D.) that Islam finally became again the accepted State religion of Persia.

Under Ghazan's successor, Sultan Uljaitu Khodabendeh, the Shi'a faith was for the first time adhered to by a ruler of Persia. It is curious that the legitimist theory of succession would appear to have been the argument used to gain Uljaitu's adherence to Shi'ism, it being represented to him that the Shi'a theory of succession more nearly accorded with the Mongol principle in this respect as applied to their own temporal concerns. The distinction "was as if," he was told, "the Shi'as were to maintain that the succession belonged of right to the descendants of Genghis Khan, while the Sunnis pretended that it also belonged to his generals."

In 1502 A. D. Shi'ism became for the first time the national religion of Persia under the Sefavids. Its introduction by Shah Ismail coincided with the threat which was held out to the integrity of Persia by the power of the Ottoman Empire which, in 1453 A. D. had established its capital at Constantinople, and in 1517 A. D. was to assume for its sultans the title of caliph.

At the time the spirit of nationality, in the form in which it has since developed both in the West and in the East, was unknown, the particular religious faith of a country determining largely its territorial limits. Patriotism, so-called, was non-existent; religion was everything. It was under such circumstances and conditions that Shi'ism became the State religion of Persia; broadly speaking to serve what would now be called a political purpose. The testimony to that effect of Father Sanson, a French missionary who lived in Persia in the second half of the seventeenth century, is important and worthy of citation. He wrote: "the pains that Sheikh Sefi took to establish a particular sect, which is so different from and so contrary to that of other Moslems, is a very good means of preventing the People from revolting at the solicitation of the Ottoman."



In the sphere of religious observances there are some important distinctions between the Sunnis and the Shi'as although, on the whole, such observances as prayer five times daily, the keeping of Friday as the weekly religious holiday, the ritualistic forms of worship in the mosques, and the performance of pilgrimages are common to the two sects. After Mecca, the most important places of pilgrimage for the Shi'as are Nejef, the tomb of Ali; Kerbela, the tomb of Hussein; Meshed, the tomb of the eighth Imam, Ali Reza; Kum, the tomb of the eighth Imam's sister, Fatima; not to speak of the innumerable wayside tombs of *imamsadehs*, or descendants of the imams, such as are to be found throughout Persia. In these the Shi'as and the Sunnis have only the pilgrimage to Mecca in common.

Both the Shi'as and the Sunnis observe the Feast of Kourban Bairam, or the day when a camel is publicly sacrificed annually, although in this they are observing a custom which has nothing to do intrinsically with Islam but dates from some thousands of years. The observance of the first ten days of Moharrem as a period of mourning for Hussein and Hassan and the dramatic representation of Hussein's tragic death are naturally restricted to the Shi'a faith. A further distinction is to be found in that, with the Shi'as, pilgrimages may be accomplished by the hiring of substitutes and in the eagerness displayed by Shi'as to find burial in the ground consecrated by the presence of the bodies of Ali, Hussein, Ali Reza and Fatima at Nejef, Kerbela, Meshed and Kum. Those of the faithful making the pilgrimage to Mecca acquire the honorific title of Hajji; those to Kerbela, of Kerbelai; and those to Meshed, of Meshedi.

A curious marriage rite sanctioned only by the Shi'a world is that involved in the institution of the temporary marriage. Such a marriage is performed by Shi'a divines provided certain prescribed conditions are fulfilled by the contracting parties. There must, for example, be a contract stipulating the period for which the marriage is contracted which may be from one day to ninety-nine years; a dowry or material consideration must be specified on the part of the bridegroom; and the woman must be of the

Islamic, the Jewish, the Christian or the Zoroastrian faith. The German traveler, Wagner, relates that in Tabriz in the last century the practice of the temporary marriage was so far accepted even by Christians that it was not uncommon for European residents temporarily domiciled there to contract such marriages with Nestorian Christian women in the presence of the Nestorian clergy. It is highly probable that the institution of the temporary marriage in Persia, which has no counterpart in the Sunni religion, is a relic of an institution coterminous with early Zoroastrianism or perhaps of an even earlier period.

In addition to these differences which have divided the Shi'as and the Sunnis, perhaps the most important distinction between the two sects, other than that of the controversy over Moham-med's lawful successor, has been that having to do with the enunciation of new religious tenets. For the Sunnis, the Koran and the so-called traditions or Sayings of the Prophet, as interpreted by the four orthodox Sunni schools—the Hanafi, the Maliki, the Shafi'i and the Hanbali—are the final authorities accepted by the *ulema*, or religious teachers. The Shi'a faith has admitted, however, a much greater degree of flexibility and adaptation in the recognition of the right of the *mujtahids*, or highest dignitaries of Shi'ism, to pronounce new enunciations of religious truths. Thus, the Sunnis hold that the Bab-ul-Ijtihad, or Gate of Endeavor, has been closed with the fixing of the Traditions of the Prophet by its four orthodox schools. The Shi'as, on the other hand, maintain that the Bab, or Gate, is still open and that new revelations of divine truth may be made. This theory, incidentally, gave rise to the development of Babism in the last century under the inspiration of the Bab who claimed that he was a new gate which had been opened by God for the guidance of man under Islam.

The *mujtahids*, who may be compared to a College of Cardinals, have no counterpart in the sect of the Sunnis. These highest Shi'a dignitaries in Persia were formerly named by the *mujtahids* of the holy Shi'a cities of Nejef in Iraq but more recently, under the spirit of nationalism, authority for their appointment in Persia has been transferred to the *mujtahids* attached to the College

of Sepahsalar in Teheran, control over which was vested in the Ministry of Education in 1931.

Their authority, however, under the régime of Reza Shah Pahlevi has been radically shorn. So all-powerful was formerly their influence that they did not hesitate to oppose their authority to the Shah. In 1890 the Tobacco Concession accorded by Nasr-ed-Din Shah to the British had to be terminated incontinently owing to the opposition aroused by the *mujtahids* who pronounced it contrary to Islam. In 1907 it was even provided by the supplementary fundamental law of the Empire implementing the Constitution that five *mujtahids* should have the right of vetoing all legislation of the newly established Majlis which might be interpreted as opposed to the spirit of Islam. However, this extraordinary power was never formally exercised owing to the failure to select the five *mujtahids* who should be given this right of veto. In 1925 the *mujtahids* last effectively made their power felt when, on the ground that the introduction of a republic in Persia was contrary to Islam, they successfully thwarted the plans entertained to that end by the Prime Minister who subsequently made himself shah. Since that time Reza Shah Pahlevi has succeeded in challenging their power and, by slow degrees, in effectively curbing their paramount influence where all other monarchs in modern times had signally failed in a like endeavor. In these efforts the Shah has been powerfully seconded by modern historical developments, not least of which has been the disappearance, since the war, of the threat of Turkish aggression and the consequent disappearance of the original *raison d'être* for the adoption of the Shi'a faith as the national religion of Persia by the Sefavids. This development, moreover, has coincided with the larger tendency on a world scale to strip the superstitious appanages of religion from life and to substitute therefor the rule of reason.

## 2. *The Religions of Babism and Bahaism*

Of the "two and seventy jarring sects" of Islam, the most notable which has taken rise in modern times from the Shi'a sect

has been that of Bahaism and its progenitor, Babism. According to the most eminent student of the latter, Professor Browne, Babism, in its original and primitive form, represented a Shi'ism of the most exaggerated type. Here there is space to sketch only in the briefest manner the development of these movements, distinctive among creeds given birth to in Persia by their spread even to Europe and the United States.

Mirza Ali Mohammed, the Bab or Gate, was born in 1820 at Shiraz. After receiving a scant education he proceeded to Nejed where he remained a year at the shrine of Ali and there became deeply imbued with the spirit of his messianic mission. Returning to Shiraz he proclaimed himself in 1844 as the Bab, or Gate, to the knowledge of the hidden or twelfth Imam.

With the most astonishing rapidity there spread over Persia recognition of the Bab's claim among even the most learned men of Islam. With the extension of his influence there was a corresponding expansion of the pretensions put forward on behalf of the Bab who, in the eyes of his followers, quickly became acknowledged as the twelfth Imam who had re-emerged from his long concealment as the Mahdi or deliverer of the world.

Since recognition of the living existence of the twelfth Imam, in whose person there were embodied, conformable with the Shi'a faith, both spiritual and temporal powers, constituted a direct challenge to the authority of the Shah, repressive measures were soon instituted against the adherents of the Bab. So great was the zeal of these followers that important insurrections broke out in Khorasan, in Mazanderan and in Zinjan against the governmental authority, which were only put down with the greatest difficulty. As Professor Browne has remarked, one of the most profound effects of the dramatic representations of the passion of Hussein "has been to create among the Persians a widely diffused enthusiasm for martyrdom" which was never more extensively nor more enthusiastically manifested than in the bold defiance of the government by the Babis in the assertion of their principles of faith. Thousands marched to their death under circumstances of the greatest heroism, as recorded by Count Gobineau in his



*Religions et Philosophies dans l'Asie Centrale.* Finally, in 1850 only six years after the announcement in Shiraz of the Bab's mission, the Bab himself met death under highly dramatic circumstances at Tabriz. His followers were everywhere proscribed, hunted down, imprisoned or executed and the Bab's religion itself banned.

Briefly, the Bab claimed that his revelation represented as great an advance over the Koran as the Koran had over the Gospels and as the Gospels had over the Old Testament. With himself as the "Point" of the divine manifestation, there were associated about him eighteen others who made up the emanations of God, the number nineteen consequently acquiring a mystical character. Thus the Bab calendar was to consist of nineteen months of nineteen days each, all personal effects were to be changed every nineteen years and all Bab families were to entertain nineteen guests every nineteen days.

The nineteen divine beings representing the divine manifestation were to be recognized and honored above all other Babis. These would control and direct the State and receive twenty per cent of the income of other Babis.

Upon the death of the Bab, the successor named by him, Mirza Yahya, was recognized as the supreme head of the Babis until his authority was challenged some years after by his half-brother and senior, Mirza Hussein Ali Baha'ullah. Both of them had removed in 1863 to Baghdad. In that year, at the request of the Persian Government, the Turkish Government deported both to Adrianople where there occurred the schism, seemingly inevitable in all religions, between the followers of Mirza Yahya and of Baha'ullah which resulted in the establishment of Bahaism. In 1868, to prevent disorder incident to the division between the Babis the Turkish Government deported Mirza Yahya and his Babi followers to Cyprus, while Baha'ullah and the Bahais were removed to Acre in Syria.

The Babis soon disappeared as an effective religious movement, but the Bahais, the better to support the claims of their leader, Baha'ullah, to the title of the true and rightful leader of the

new religion, went so far as to endeavor to suppress the literature of the early history of Babism and so far to distort the true history of the rise of the Bah as to relegate him to an inferior position in relation to Baha'ullah, making him a kind of John the Baptist or forerunner of the true spiritual head, Baha. As a clue to the growth and development of religions in the distant past nothing is more enlightening of the extreme lengths to which fanaticism is capable of driving men than the history and development of Bahaism. Although well told by the Reverend W. M. Miller in his book, *Bahaism*, the deep significance of Doctor Miller's exposure of the chicanery attending the founding of Bahaism, for the study of the origin of religions, would appear to have escaped this scholarly missionary of the Presbyterian Church in Persia.

Curiously enough, the original movement, Babism, has now almost completely disappeared and Bahaism which, like Babism, threatened at one time in the last century to become of great strength and influence in Persia, has lost likewise its influence in the home of its origin. Today it survives among a few Europeans and Americans. It is thus at once both the latest and perhaps at the same time the last serious religious movement to emanate from Persia and Asia where all the world's religions have been spawned and where, now that mysticism and idealism are being supplanted by materialistic conceptions of life, reason is banishing from men's minds jinns and demons, and angels as well as gods.

### 3. *Religions of the Manichees and the Mazdakites*

Of the religions of the world which have had their sources in Persia—Mithraism, Zoroastrianism, Mazdakism, Manichaeism, Shi'ism, Babism and Bahaism—there remains only to mention briefly the religions of Mani and Mazdak. These two are both alike in having risen under the Sassanian Empire, being inspired, the one by Mani in the third century A. D., and the other by Mazdak at the beginning of the sixth century A. D.

The announcement of Mani's prophetic mission was made by

him in 242 A. D. at Ctesiphon, the Sassanian winter capital, his gospel being based on Mithraism with certain elements borrowed from Christianity. To quote Professor Burkitt, the authority on the religion of the Manichees:

The message that Mani announced was, in brief, that there are two eternal sources or principles, Light and Dark; that by the regrettable mixture of Dark and Light this visible and tangible Universe has come into being; and that the aim and object of those who are children of Light is not the improvement of this world, for that is impossible, but its gradual extinction, by the separation of the Light particles from the Dark.

Besides the Two Roots, or Principles, as they were called, of the Dark and Light representing the powers of evil and good, there were the Three Moments consisting of the Past, the Present and the Future. In the Past the Dark succeeded in mingling with the Light, as also in the Present, but in the Future they will be separated, and man may assist in this great work of distillation by the consecration of his life to the spirit of Light or the good forces of the world. Mani further conceived of himself as the final and last Prophet in historical succession to Buddha, Zoroaster and Christ, thus anticipating in this claim the Prophet Mohammed.

Although Mani himself suffered the fate of most prophets by being put to death about 276 A. D., his religion spread both westward and eastward of Persia. In the west his most famous convert was St. Augustine, whose conversion from Manichæism to Christianity inspired his famous *Confessions*. In the east the religion of Mani long survived in the region comprised within modern Turkestan where the discovery of fragments of Manichæan works in recent years has furnished most of the information available to students of the religion.

Of Mazdak, a Persian, and of his extraordinary success in inducing the acceptance of his faith by the Sassanian king Kobad who ascended the throne in 487 A. D., little needs be said. The

religion hardly survived the death of its founder but it is important as having contributed to the genesis of the Ismailis, or Assassins, and probably to some extent also of the Babis.

Mazdak, a high priest of the Zoroastrian faith, announced himself as a reformer of that creed. He proclaimed that all men were born equal and that, accordingly, all men should share equally in the world's goods, while it is also asserted that he advocated a community of women. To these tenets were added, according to Rawlinson, certain beliefs borrowed from the Brahmins and from other Oriental sources, such as the sacredness of animal life, the observance of the simple life and the need of abstemiousness and devotion.

By means of a clever imposture, involving the hiding of a confederate in a cavern beneath a sacred fire altar, and of appearing to converse with the flame itself, he so far imposed upon Kobad as to induce that monarch's acceptance of the faith espoused by Mazdak. The result of the adoption of such tenets by the King inspired, naturally, widespread dissatisfaction among the rich and those generally in authority. The King was deposed, but in 501 A. D. he was permitted to re-ascend the throne. He thereupon gave it out that, while as an individual he continued to adhere to the doctrines of Mazdak, as a king he did not propose to support the sectaries in any extreme or violent measures. Some time later, with the decline of the power of the Mazdakites following the withdrawal of the King's active support, the sect languished and, in the end, Mazdak himself was done to death. The circumstances of his assassination were cruel in the extreme. The Mazdakites, having been invited to a great banquet at the palace, were seized as they entered and buried head downward in the earth with only their feet protruding. Mazdak himself, who had been kept in audience in the palace, was then invited by King Kobad's son to take a walk through the garden. Pointing to the rows of feet of Mazdak's followers, "Behold," said the Prince, "the crop which your evil doctrines have brought forth!" Whereupon Mazdak was himself seized and buried in a like manner.

Professor Browne, with his usual critical insight, expresses



great doubt of the advocacy by the Mazdakites of promiscuous sex relations. As he notes, it was a charge likewise frequently brought against the Babis by their opponents and in our own days we have learned how little credence is to be given to unscrupulous propagandists in like instances, from the charge brought at one time against the Bolsheviks of the nationalization of women. Presumably this is an old canard which has been used from the beginning of history to blacken the faces of revolutionists, whether in religion or politics, the ace in the hole of die-hard conservatives.

In surveying these many religions which have their roots in Persia it cannot be occasion for surprise that Persians have come to regard all religions with a spirit of skepticism, even those who are the most earnest professed adherents of the Shi'a faith of Islam. As Gobineau, that most profound observer of Persia, has remarked: "Minds habituated to continual change, inclined to doubt, and observing spread out before them the accumulation of all the faiths which have ever been held in the entire world since the most remote antiquity, are apt to be exhausted by this panorama, and should be, and once habituated to doubt, they cannot escape this disposition to skepticism."

## CHAPTER VIII

### THROUGH PERSIAN AZERBAIJAN AND KURDISTAN

#### *1. Importance of Azerbaijan in History*

THROUGHOUT Persian history the geographical center of political power has tended to shift, with the expansion and contraction of the Persian Empire, now to the north and to the south, and now from east to west.

At the dawn of history when Persia was a congeries of more or less independent tribes, including Medes and Persians, Bactrians and Hyrcanians, political gravity in the territory now known as Persia was diffused and uncentralized. At an early date Susa, the seat of the Elamite Empire, became in the south an important political center. With the rise of the Achæmenian dynasty that power was centered at Pasargadæ, Persepolis, Ecbatana, Susa and Babylon. There ensued the conquest of Persia by Alexander and, after his death, the division of the great empire formed by him among his generals when Persia was ruled by the Seleucids for a brief period from Seleucia in Mesopotamia. The Parthian power, taking its rise at Hecatompylos, near Damghan in northern Persia, found it expedient to shift the seat of its empire closer to its geographical center, at Ctesiphon, near Babylon. Parthia succumbed in turn to the Sassanians, who continued to make Ctesiphon their principal seat, with Ecbatana and Susa their occasional capitals.

There followed the Arab Conquest in the seventh century when Persia was ruled successively from Medina, Damascus and Baghdad. With the decline of the Caliphate, independent dynasties arose in Persia, of which the most notable were the Samanides, ruling eastern Persia from Samarcand and Bokhara, the Buwayhids in the north, and a host of independent principalities in the

south. Power was once again dispersed and passed in part, now to the Ghaznavids, making a meteoric appearance from Ghazna in Afghanistan (962-1186 A. D.), now to Khwarizmshahs from Khiva (1077-1220 A. D.), until the appearance of the Seljuks (1037-1300 A. D.), when the center of political power was re-established in Persia at Nishapur and at Ray.

With the outpouring in 1220 A. D. from inner Asia of the Mongols under Genghis Khan, the subsequent sack of Baghdad in 1258 A. D. and the extinction of the power of the Abbasid Caliphate, there arose, beginning with his grandson, Hulagu Khan, the Mongol Il-Khan dynasty (1258-1336 A. D.) which, for the first time in the history of Persia, made northwest Persia in the neighborhood of Tabriz the center of political gravity. From the collapse of the Mongol power, until the rise of the Timurids under Tamerlane, when Persia was ruled, at first from Samarcand in the east and then under Tamerlane's son, Shah Rukh, from Ray, there intervened a brief period dominated by a number of independent dynasties. These included the Jalayirs in Baghdad and Azerbaijan, the Muzaffarids in Fars, the Sabadars in Khorasan, and the Karts in Herat. There followed the rise of the Turcoman White and Black Sheep dynasties (1378-1502 A. D.), centering about Tabriz until the advent of the Sefavid dynasty which rose likewise in northwest Persia, at Ardebil. Under the Sefavids, for the first time since the Sassanians, there was imposed a purely Persian sovereignty over the whole of Persia, untrammelled by subordination to the Caliphate or to other alien influences, whether political or religious or politico-religious.

The adoption of the Shi'a faith by the Sefavids, with its repudiation of the authority of the Caliphate whose attributes had been absorbed by the Ottoman sultans, was due less to religious than to purely political considerations. It was influenced by the desire of the Sefavids to interpose a strong national spirit in the way of the growing power of the Ottoman Empire which marched with Persia along its entire western border, the time being one when, in the Moslem world, religion and nationality were synonymous.

Upon the disintegration of the Sefavid power early in the eighteenth century, precipitated by an Afghan invasion, Nadir Shah, the Napoleon of the East, rose for a brief instant in north-east Persia to add a page to the history of the Persian nation. After his death, the Afshars in the north and the Zands in the south disputed the hegemony of the country until the representative of another Turkish tribe of the north, Aga Mohamed Khan, of the Kajars, laid the foundations of the Kajar dynasty, only terminated by the rise of a new dynasty under the reigning monarch, Reza Shah Pahlevi. This latest Persian King of Kings has seen fit to continue to maintain at Teheran the seat of political power where it was first transferred by the Kajars after it had been shifted through the centuries of Persian history, from Susa, Ecbatana, Persepolis, and Pasargadæ to Babylon, thence to Hecatompylos in the north, to Ctesiphon in the west, to Medina, Damascus and Baghdad, to Bokhara, Samarcand and Ghazna in the east, to Ray and Nishapur in northern Persia, thence to Maragha, Tabriz and Sultaniya in the northwest, back again to Samarcand and later to Ray, thence again to Tabriz, to Kazvin, Ispahan and Shiraz, and finally to Teheran.

Accordingly Azerbaijan, the most northwestern and one of the richest provinces of Persia (not to be confused with Soviet Azerbaijan in the Caucasus), has exercised political dominance over Persia, with but brief intervals, from the thirteenth to the sixteenth centuries under the Mongol Il-Khans, the White and Black Sheep dynasties and at the beginning of the relatively long rule of the Sefavids.

With its neighboring province, Kurdistan, to the southwest, Azerbaijan has been exposed throughout history to the invasions of foreign armies, constituting as it has one of the natural avenues of entry to the great Persian plateau from the north and west. Known to the ancients as Media Atropatene, its territory has passed from the Empires of the Assyrians and Medes to that of Cyrus, has fallen under the scepter of Alexander, has been fought over and has been dominated, now by the Kingdom of Armenia and now by the Empire of Parthia and, after having



been incorporated in the Empire of the Sassanians, acknowledged the successive rule of Arabs, Mongols, Turcomans, Turks and Persians. In more recent times it constituted the bloodiest battlefields in the wars of the Sefavids with the Ottoman Empire, and in the wars between Persia and Czarist Russia at the beginning of the nineteenth century. As late as the World War it was an important scene of conflict between Russia and Turkey when Persian neutrality was violated as flagrantly by Russia as that of Belgium by Germany. Now on the north it is bordered by Soviet Armenia, on the northwest by Turkey, while western Azerbaijan and Kurdistan form a boundary between Persia and the new state of Iraq.

## *2. Importance of Azerbaijan as a Trade Route*

From the earliest times Azerbaijan has served as one of the most important bridgeheads for communication between Persia and the west. Upon its territory the two principal lines of communication from Europe to Asia, the one from the Black Sea through Trebizond, Erzerum and Bayazid, and the other from Tiflis and Baku in the Caucasus, converged at Tabriz upon the great trade entrepot of Persia and the East.

Before the development of sea routes to the East in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries two principal means of land communication existed between Europe and Asia: one across central Russia; the other from Asia Minor over Persia. Prior to the eighteenth century, however, Russia was confined to a territory hardly extending east of the Volga and exclusive also of the Caucasus and of an important part of what is now South Russia in Europe, being inhabited by wild and unruly Tatar tribes who offered little, if any, security to the traveler. Indeed, it is only within the last generation that, with the subjugation of the Khanates of Khiva and Bokhara, the reduction of the Turcomans of Merv, and the inclusion of these territories of Central Asia within the Russian Empire, the regions to the southeast of the Caspian Sea have been made secure.

Hence, even in the case of the Russian bridgehead to Asia, Persia has, until lately, constituted an important link in that chain of communications between the East and the West, the route followed through Russia having been until the most recent years by way of the Volga to the west coast of the Caspian and thence into Persia. From the Mediterranean and Asia Minor the routes in ancient and medieval times were through the Black Sea to Trebizond and thence to Tabriz, across the Caucasus to Tabriz, or across the Syrian desert to Baghdad and thence to Basra and southern Persia, or from Baghdad into central Persia by way of Kermanshah, Hamadan and Kazvin.

Owing, however, to the precarious state of travel over the great Syrian desert, the most generally used means of communication (until the development of sea routes to India and China) were by way of the Black Sea, the Caucasus and the Volga. The first two converged upon Tabriz. In the case of the third the traveler more frequently than not passed from the mouth of the Volga at Astrakhan to the west coast of the Caspian and thence into Persia by Tabriz or Ardebil rather than across the Caspian and into Persia by way of Resht and Kazvin.

So great was the development of Tabriz as an entrepot for camel caravans bearing burdens from India, China and central Asia for the Byzantine Empire, Venice, Genoa and the West generally that, as early as the thirteenth century, Venetian and Genoese consuls were to be found at Tabriz where the bazaars extended over a greater area than in probably any city of the East. It was at Tabriz that Marco Polo crossed into Persia in the same century on his way to the Court of the Great Khan in central Asia, and it was here that Clavijs in 1404 came from Trebizond and Khoy on his way through Sultaniya, Kazvin and Teheran as Spanish Ambassador to the Court of Tamerlane at Samarcand. Through Tabriz passed most of the great European travelers to Persia and India of the seventeenth and subsequent centuries: Chardin, Tavernier, Thévenot, Le Brun, Mandelslo, as well as the embassies sent by the European Powers to Persia in increasing numbers from the time of Shah Abbas.

The development of sea routes to the East by the Cape of Good Hope in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries and the opening of communications through the Mediterranean and thence overland to the Red Sea occasioned the first great blows to the trading supremacy of Tabriz as the most important gateway of commerce between the East and the West. The completion of the Suez Canal in the last century imposed upon it a heavier disability. The development of the Russian network of railways in the Caucasus and the opening of the Russian Trans-Caspian lines from Krasnovodsk on the eastern Caspian and from Samara on the Volga across Turkestan, linking Europe by rail with Tashkent, Bokhara and Samarcand, made still greater inroads upon the concentration of eastern commerce with the West through Tabriz. More lately, since the war, the resumption of the railway route through Turkey to Nasibin, the development of a motor transport line from the latter point to Baghdad, the development of the alternative desert motor route from Damascus to Baghdad, and the construction of a motor highway connecting the central Persian plateau with Baghdad, have contrived virtually to bring about the final relegation of Tabriz from the position which it so long occupied as one of the great trading centers of the East to that of a center for the exchange of the commodities of northwestern Persia for those of the Soviet Union and Turkey. The work in progress on the Trans-Persian Railway from the Caspian to the Gulf must, in time, subvert still further even the circumscribed position to which Tabriz has been reduced, unless the increasingly cordial political relations between Persia and Turkey portend a closer economic collaboration, including the development of a regular rail or motor transport service from Teheran to the Black Sea by way of Tabriz, Erzerum and Trebizond. The Turkish Government is very keen on the development of this natural outlet for the exchange of Persian commerce across Turkey, and already in 1935, following the Shah's visit to Turkey, an opening was made of the route by the passage of a through Turkish motor bus from Trebizond to Teheran. Its further development, now that relations between Persia and Turkey are more cordial than they have

been since the establishment of the Turkish power on the Bosphorus in the fifteenth century, may eventually lead to the economic renaissance of Tabriz. Certainly, nothing else will.

The development of the Trans-Persian Railway has proceeded, in part, from the desire of Persia to free itself from the economic grip of Russia, exerted by the geographic proximity to Russia of the rich northern provinces and, until now, by the fact that the sole outlet for the production of those provinces has been through Russia.

In the nineteenth century the history of Persia was a history of the rival aims of the two great empires of Russia and Great Britain to dominate this essential bridgehead between the East and the West. For centuries previous the East had poured itself through Persia in successive waves upon the West, incursions of which Turkey represented and still represents the farthest outpost. In the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, beginning with the appearance of the Portuguese and the Dutch in the Gulf, the tide, which had run so long from east to west, turned and was replaced by a movement of pressure from the West upon the East. This reached its culmination in recent years with the rivalry of Russia and Great Britain for the possession of Persia which interposed itself between the territories of those empires.

For the moment the rise of Soviet Russia and the relinquishment by it of the imperialistic aims of its predecessor have eased this century-old tension over the former prostrate body of Persia. Moreover, the development of air transport and the freedom gained thereby over those geographic factors by which communications were once cabined, cribbed and confined, has reduced the importance of Persia in the British imperial scheme of things. This is particularly true now that Britain has found it both possible and convenient to develop and control an air route to India from Baghdad to Karachi by way of the Arabian littoral of the Gulf, over whose petty sheikhdoms Britain exercises paramount sovereignty.

The disappearance of Tabriz, therefore, as one of the great trading centers of the East is in a measure symbolical of the



passing, for the time being at least, of the importance of Persia as a great natural bridgehead between Asia and Europe.

Tabriz, therefore, and with it the adjacent seats of Mongol and Sefavid power at Maragha and Ardebil, together with the provinces of Azerbaijan and Kurdistan, are of interest today less from their importance in the pulsing present life of Persia than as the scene of some of the greatest of its past glories. Within this northwestern portion of Persia have been enacted some of the most colorful scenes in the historical pageant of the country. Happily, too, on this once great stage have been left here and there monuments suggestive of races and men of great souls and powerful and artistic imaginations. There also are remnants of Nestorian Christians and Kurds, affording living museums of an ancient Christian creed and of the most ancient ways of man.

### 3. *Teheran to Tabriz*

The modern highway from Teheran to Tabriz follows, as far as Siah Dohan, twenty-four miles west of Kazvin, the familiar main trunk line from Teheran to Baghdad. At Siah Dohan the Tabriz road takes off to the left and passes almost at once into a rolling fertile countryside, dotted with heavily wooded villages and rich pasture lands for sheep and cattle.

Some work on this road, following in general the ancient caravan track from Tabriz, was undertaken at the beginning of this century by a Russian company under a concession granted by the Persian Government. It is only within the last few years, however, that the road has been brought to its present excellent state, including the cutting of a way through the Pass of Kaflan Kuh between Jamalabad and Mianeh.

Chardin noted on his entrance into Persia in 1672 that it was at Abhar, some twenty-eight miles north of Siah Dohan, that the inhabitants began to speak Persian, "whereas all the way before the Vulgar Language is Turkish, not altogether as they speak it in Turkey but with some little difference." He adds that "from Ebher [Abhar] to the Indies they speak Persian, more

or less neat." The situation in this respect has not changed since Chardin's visit, a Turkish dialect, a heritage of the strong Turkish influence in northwestern Persia and of the Turkish origin of a large proportion of its inhabitants, being spoken from Kazvin to Julfa and Khoy.

Abhar was found "jolly and delightful" by Chardin, who noted in the town a castle built of earth, the sun-baked bricks of which were referred to also by Morier a century and a half later. Of far greater interest, however, than the remains of this mud citadel, such as distinguishes almost every Persian town, is the ancient city of Sultaniya, in the fourteenth century the seat of authority of the last Mongol Il-Khans of Persia, and now only a straggling village lying thirty miles north of Abhar.

Some miles before the road approaches the village of Sultaniya, the sepulchre of the Sultan Uljaitu Khodabendeh, who made of Sultaniya his royal residence, raises its great domed head above the surrounding countryside. Built in emulation of the tomb of the Seljuk Sultan Sanjar (1117-1157 A. D.) at Merv, the mausoleum of Khodabendeh represents the most important domed structure ever erected in Persia. Although the colored tiles which once decorated its exterior are crumbling into ruins, the imposing structure, with its great cupola of a diameter of eighty-one feet resting on an octagonal base and rising some one hundred and fifty feet in the air, impresses the observer with its grandeur long before it is reached, an impression heightened with every step which brings one nearer it.

To reach the village we passed the police post on the Tabriz road beyond a line parallel with the sepulchre. Turning sharply to the left we then made our way over an uncertain track across the fields within some hundred yards of the tomb. There we were blocked by narrow village lanes through which we had to pass on foot in order to gain immediate access to the edifice.

Having first established their principal residence at Maragha, and later transferred it to Tabriz, the Mongol Il-Khans finally made their capital at Sultaniya. Here are still ash hills, indicating the great antiquity of the site, but it was only at the beginning

of the fourteenth century that the locality was dignified for a brief period, under Sultan Khodabendeh and under his son and successor, Abu Said Bahadour, as the Mongol Il-Khan capital, and transformed into a great city. It was in 1310 A. D. that the capital was inaugurated at Sultaniya by Khodabendeh with appropriate ceremony. His tomb, which dominated then as now the vicinity, is believed to have been built by him between that date and the date of his death in 1316 A. D.

Khodabendeh, who was baptized a Christian, as were also a number of his predecessors, was in correspondence with the greatest sovereigns of Europe, including Philippe le Bel, Edward the Second, and Pope Clement V, by whom he was pressed to impose the Christian faith in Persia. The attachment which he entertained for his Moslem wife, however, proved stronger than the Christian religion of his early years, and he eventually adopted the faith of Islam, continuing thus the tradition established by his father, Ghazan, who made Islam the religion of the Il-Khans.

The greatest monuments and the greatest cities have a life in the East almost as precarious as that of man. All that is left of this once great city, at one time the embodiment of the pride and power of the Mongols in Persia, is the mausoleum of its ruler, and one or two smaller tombs lying close by, tombs of men within an entombed city.

When Olearius visited Sultaniya in 1637 on his way, as Secretary of the Embassy from the Duke of Holstein to the Sefavid Court, he found the reliques of Sultan Khodabendeh, surrounded by a grate, still preserved within the mausoleum. The grate was of "Indian steel, polish'd and wrought Damask-wise, the Barrs being about the bigness of a man's arm," described by Olearius as "one of the noblest things that are to be seen all over Persia." Leading to the eight minarets, which encircled the eight sides of the great building, were eight low stairways. At the outer entrance was a square fountain and, among the appanages, were a "fair garden" and a summer house. All have disappeared.

In Morier's time, at the beginning of the last century, one of the eight minarets was still intact, but only the stumps of the

eight are now left. At the time of his visit in 1812 workmen were engaged in demolishing the principal gate of the sepulchre to use the materials in the construction of pleasure houses which the Kajar ruler, Fath Ali Shah, was erecting in the neighborhood. This moved Morier to the very apposite observation, equally applicable to any age of Persian history, that:

Few monuments in Persia can hope to survive many ages; for the kings, who succeed the founders, are anxious only to be founders themselves, and instead of taking a pride to preserve the works of their predecessors, as records of the genius or greatness of their monarchy, they take pains only to destroy them, that they may build new structures with the materials, and attach their own names also to great buildings.

Within the interior which, as Morier justly observed, resembles a mosque rather than a tomb, galleries extend over each of the entrances along the base of the dome leading into smaller galleries. "These," he noted, "are beautifully adorned with the neatest work that I had ever seen; all the cornices of the doors, the segments of the arches and the various niches are covered with Arabic sentences; which in some places are surmounted in a smaller character by Cufic inscriptions, all either painted in fresco or raised in plaster." The interior of this monument, of which he remarked, "I do not recollect a building which could have surpassed its original state," he found employed as a magazine for straw. Today this noble structure, while at least spared usage as a barn, is tenanted by pigeons, and its spacious and cool interior is resorted to in summer by natives of the neighborhood for sleep and gossip. From the curious crowd attracted there by my visit I purchased a handful of copper coins and a star-shaped blue-and-tan-colored tile, contemporaneous with Khodabنده. By one of the same natives I was conducted over a plain, strewn with fragments of glazed tiles, to another monument of Mongol greatness in Sultaniya, a small circular tower,



the tomb of Prince Oglu, adjacent to the ruined walls of a *medrasseh*, or college, both dating from the time of Khodabendeh.

Twenty-two miles north of Sultaniya is the town of Zinjan, destroyed by Tamerlane, and plundered on more than one occasion by the Turks. It is chiefly notable in modern times for the destruction wrought by Persian Government forces in 1850 when putting down the desperate resistance of the Babis.

Leaving Zinjan the road enters a bare and desolate country broken by small narrow canyons reminiscent of the western badlands of the United States, necessitating a series of winding descents and ascents. At length sixty miles from Zinjan the village of Jamalabad is reached.

Surmounting the road which descends thence to the banks of the Kizil Uzun, which here makes its meandering way through the mountains, the village is notable as containing the ruins of a once-imposing caravanserai of the seventeenth century. Here Chardin lodged overnight in 1672 only a few years subsequent to its erection, but it is now tumbling into ruin in common with most of man's works in Asia. The substantial walls remain, as also the inscription over the entrance, recording the date of its building as in the time of Shah Abbas II.

The inscription is in the form of a poem which, literally translated, reads:

In the reign of Abbas, Shah-in-Shah of the world,  
Oglu, the Emir of his Court,  
Who is second to Abbas in equity and justice,  
Built the inn on the edge of the desert at Jamalabad.  
May the structure of his fortune remain perpetually firm,  
Since he laid the foundation of this house of prayer for  
the Shah!  
When this inn was completed as a result of the muscular  
strength  
And efforts exerted by the best master of masonry,  
By chance, O Fayer! the following chronogram was  
revealed:  
Robat-i-Janeb-i-Dasht at Jamalabad.

Cut by Ismail (in the Moslem lunar year) 1065\*  
(A. D. 1654).

Descending from Jamalabad by a precipitous road, one reaches the banks of the Kizil Uzun, and the river itself is crossed by means of an unusually beautiful brick and stone bridge of three elliptical arches. Morier considered it an ancient structure dating from the earliest ages of Mohammedanism. Actually, the bridge was built in 1632 A. D. in the reign of Shah Sefi.

Both Chardin in the seventeenth and Morier in the nineteenth century observed a fortified edifice on a mountain crest overlooking the bridge. According to Chardin it was called the Virgin's Castle by the Persians, who represented that "Artaxerxes caus'd it to be built to imprison therein a Princess of the Blood." The same writer noted also that "Abbas the Great caus'd it to be utterly demolished, as serving only for a Retreat to a number of Robbers." The structure, however, of which only traces now remain, is without either particular artistic or archæological interest.

From the bridge over the Kizil Uzun the road winds for a short distance through the picturesque gorge cut in the mountains by that river and, emerging from the canyon at the end of some ten miles, recrosses the river over a splendid brick and stone bridge of many arches, many times reconstructed but probably originally Sefavid.

Mianeh is only a mile or more beyond the bridge, a town chiefly remembered by foreign travelers for a peculiarly venomous insect which it harbors and from whose bite a fever is contracted. It is worthy also of being recorded that here at the age of thirty-four died Thévenot, the notable French traveler of the seventeenth

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\*In Persian poetry it is customary for the poet, as the author, Fayes, does in this instance, to invoke his own name in the course of the poem. Ismail was evidently the stonemason who cut the inscription, itself a work of art. By a conventional system the Persians maintain a conceit, to which they have long been attached, of attributing numerical value to letters and of thus constituting a pertinent date in an apposite phrase. Thus, the numerical value of the letters in "Robat-i-Janeb-i-Dasht at Jamalabad" (the caravan-serai on the edge of the desert at Jamalabad) in Persian gives the date of erection of the building in 1065 A. H. (1654 A. D.).

century, on his return to France in 1667 from the Indies. The large folio volume containing the published account of his travels opens with the philosophic and apt reflection that "the desire of traveling is as old as Human Nature." That desire pursued him on his journeys through Egypt, the Levant, Persia and India, some of his travels in Persia being made in the company of his no less renowned fellow countryman, Tavernier. When only thirty-four years of age he had fulfilled the desire of travel beyond the dreams of most men in the twentieth century. Yet how many have acquitted themselves in a life of three score years and ten in this age of steam and electricity so well as the youthful Thévenot?

Mianeh lies some one hundred and eleven miles from Tabriz. Not long after quitting it, the countryside becomes again, like that between Siah Dohan and Sultaniya, rich with verdure and relieved by a succession of wooded villages, the green of the trees being still further accentuated by extensive tan-colored wheat fields. The configuration of the country remains rolling, but the hills slope more gently than in the waste lands between Zinjan and Jamalabad, and the character of the soil itself is transformed from an unnutritive red to a black loamy earth.

Twenty-five miles south of Tabriz the road passes the southern end of the small Lake Ghorigol where hundreds of wild ducks disport themselves undisturbed. As the road ascends the Shebeli Pass, the highway leading to Ardebil is passed to the right, and the winding way surmounting the Pass is made over an excellent motor road. At the very foot of the Pass on the northern side is a noble Sefavid caravanserai, as substantial in its baked-brick imposing form as many a cathedral of Europe. The caravanserai, only fourteen years older than that at Jamalabad, is distinguished from the generality of caravanserais in Persia, whether Sefavid or earlier or later, by the fact that it is without any interior open court. Instead, it is entirely covered by a series of cupolas, supported by arches, dividing the interior into a number of spacious chambers. In each of these arched chambers, separated from one another only by the pillars supporting the arches,

are fireplaces with flues. The explanation of this unusual construction is to be found no doubt in the extreme severity of the winters here. A brief inscription over the entrance describes the building as the "work of the dervish, Hamd-al-Mohtaj," followed by a line reading, "Yusuf, son of Shah Malek of Ispahan," and the Moslem lunar year, 1051 (1640 A. D.), presumably the date of the building's construction.

Tabriz is now only eighteen miles distant, the approach being had through a succession of villages of cheerful appearance surrounded by streams of running water and the innumerable apricot, peach and plum trees for which northwestern Persia is renowned.

#### 4. *Maragha and the Mongols*

Before undertaking an examination of Tabriz itself let us rather, in the interest of historical sequence, pay a visit to the once far-famed city of Maragha which lies some eighty miles southwest of Tabriz in a region of fertility exceptional for Persia. The present road, built as a motor highway only recently and still under improvement, leads not only to Maragha but extends southwestward as far as Sauj Bulagh, sixty-four miles beyond, from whence the traveler may descend to Mosul in Iraq through the Rowanduz Pass, or, passing south from Sauj Bulagh to Sanandaj (Senna), reach the main Teheran-Baghdad highway at either Hamadan or Kermanshah.

From the village of Sarderud, a few miles outside of Tabriz, through Detargan, twenty-five miles farther, there is little to distinguish the country other than a sight of the southern extremity of Lake Rezayieh (formerly Lake Urumiah) twelve miles beyond Guban. As Maragha is approached, however, over the same rolling countryside which characterizes most of Azerbaijan, the traveler is struck by the apparent extreme fertility of the soil. Great fields of rich grass offer ideal grazing grounds for the countless sheep and cows roaming the valleys and the gentle declivities of the neighboring hills.

Dr. Christy Wilson, of the American Mission in Tabriz, my



kind host and helpful guide to the antiquities of Tabriz, suggests this fertility as having been one of the strong inducements to the choice of Maragha by Hulagu Khan as his central residence after the sack of Baghdad in 1258 A. D. and the establishment of the Mongol power in Persia. To the availability of rich grazing grounds for the vast flocks and herds of the Mongols, there may be added the advantages of Maragha's situation already alluded to. It lies easily accessible to two passes to the tableland of Iran, which were included within the Mongol Il-Khan's dominions, and gives also fairly easy access in two directions to southern and central Persia. Moreover, Maragha commanded routes around both the eastern and western sides of the great lake to which it lies adjacent in the southwest, having access northward to the Black Sea and to the Caucasus, which likewise lay within the Mongol realm.

The Mongol invasion of Persia which began in 1220 A. D. was representative—but on a far greater than ordinary scale—of that constant irruption of nomadic peoples, from the great depths of Asia upon northeast Persia, which persisted throughout history until only a generation or more ago. The forces set in motion by Genghis Khan, however, did not spend themselves in Persia but extended onward to the Mediterranean and over what is now southwest Russia. There is no record that the great Mongol conqueror himself ever set foot on Persian soil.

After his death in 1227 A. D., the far-flung dominions of the Great Khan were parceled out, for administrative purposes, among his sons or their heirs with paramount authority exercised by the Great Khan at Karakorum. Later, with the rise to power of Hulagu Khan, grandson of Genghis, to whose branch of the family Persia, with certain territories contiguous thereto, had been assigned, the tie of the western possessions of the Mongols with the central seat of authority at Karakorum in eastern Asia was considerably loosened. It was at last virtually dissolved with the establishment in Persia of an independent dynasty of Il-Khans under Ghazan upon his adoption of the Islamic faith.

In 1251 A. D. Hulagu Khan had been deputed by the Great

Khan to crush the Assassins, an esoteric Islamic sect whose leader and followers had entrenched themselves in Persia in fortified mountainous retreats of extreme inaccessibility. Having accomplished this task, Hulagu Khan marched on Baghdad, seat of the Abbasid Caliphate. Thence he retired to Maragha, distant only a few days' journey, and from there, under the title of Il-Khan, he exercised dominion over territory extending from the Oxus in western Turkestan to Egypt, with only a most shadowy recognition of the overlordship of the Mongol Great Khan in hither Asia. This Il-Khan dynasty was destined to rule Persia for a brief century, its power being eventually diffused at the close of the fourteenth century among a number of petty dynasties until the advent of a new force from the East in 1381 A. D. in the person of Tamerlane.

Twice, from the Arab Conquest in 641 A. D. to modern times, Persia and western Europe have been drawn together against a common foe. The last occasion was in the seventeenth century when Moslem Persia of the Shi'a persuasion was solicited by a succession of embassies from Europe to make common cause with Christendom against the Moslem Ottoman Empire of the Sunnis. Less well known is the first and earlier occasion, when the pagan or Buddhist Mongol Il-Khans, after their irruption into the Middle East, were for many years the subject of earnest solicitations of the Pope and the principal Christian Powers to embrace Christianity and to make joint cause with Christendom against the successors of Saladin in Egypt for the recovery of the Holy Land. As Moslem Persia and Christendom were drawn together against the Ottoman Empire, so the Mongol Il-Khans, exercising dominion from the Oxus to the Mediterranean with the seat of their authority in Persia, were drawn to the crusading spirit of Christendom against the principal existing Moslem power, that in Egypt, whose authority extended to Palestine and at times to Syria.

Thus is explained the constant official intercourse of the Courts of western Europe and the Pope with both the Mongol Il-Khans in Persia, beginning with Hulagu Khan, and with the Court of

the Great Khan in Inner Asia. Envoys from Abaga (1265-1281 A. D.), from 1267 on, several times visited the Pope, the King of Aragon, and the Kings of France and England. There is a letter of record as early as 1275 A. D. from Edward I to Abaga. Similarly, Abaga's son, Arghun (1284-1291 A. D.), was in correspondence with the Pope, Philippe le Bel of France and Edward I of England. The reply of Edward I complimented Arghun on the intention expressed of waging war against the Sultan of Egypt. But the overtures of Arghun led to nothing concrete, as the Christian Powers, having been expelled from their last stronghold on the eastern Mediterranean coast of Syria, had begun to lose their crusading spirit. Nevertheless, the friendly intercourse between western Europe and the Mongols, of which the reception accorded the Polos by the Great Khan is an excellent example, continued after the Il-Khans adhered to Islam. In their eagerness to obtain allies against their hereditary enemy, the Sultan of Egypt, they even, as in the case of Khodabendeh, undertook to conceal their recent adoption of the Moslem religion.

Maragha, the greatest and the most celebrated of the cities of the Mongols in Persia, is situated, as Morier observed a century ago, "in a long narrow valley, running nearly north and south; and the shape of the town, an irregular oblong, partakes of that of the valley. On the west it is girt by a range of low table hills, which were levelled by Ilalacou (Ilulagu) Khan, King of Persia, grandson to Jenghiz Khan, in order to facilitate the operations of his magnificent observatory which he there erected and where he caused Nassir Eddin Toussi, the celebrated astronomer, with several of the best astrologers of the day, to observe the motions of the heavenly bodies."

The hills whose crests were leveled are three in number, standing out in sharp outline against the landscape overlooking Maragha and constituting one of the most imposing reminders in Persia of the vanished greatness of the Mongol power. Of the observatory itself, "splendidly furnished with armillary spheres and astrolabes," nothing remains except some underground chambers. It has been suggested that these were used for maintaining

the instruments of the observatory at an even temperature; the notion that they may represent the crypt of an ancient Christian church has been treated by André Godard, the talented Director of the Persian Archaeological Service, with the short shrift which such a fanciful theory deserves.

The disposition of the Il-Khans, which became more and more pronounced as their conquests were secured, to engage in something more than the universal destruction wrought by their ancestor, Genghis Khan, is well brought out in the account given of the occasion for the building of the observatory at Maragha. After the sack of Baghdad, when Hulagu Khan had retired to Maragha, Nasr-ed-Din Tusi suggested to his master that he should do something more than destroy. Nasr-ed-Din cited the answer made by the Khwarizmshah to the remonstrances of the people of Tabriz when his troops were pillaging the town, that "I came as a world conqueror, and not as a world preserver." Hulagu Khan replied, "Thank God, I am both a world conqueror and a world preserver," and at once commissioned the astronomer to set up his observatory.

There are, besides, at Maragha five imposing burnt-brick towers of some twenty to fifty feet in height situated in various parts of the town. Although showing considerable variation in general form and decoration they have been commonly assigned by tradition to the period of the Mongol occupation of the city.

Monsieur Godard, however, in a recent penetrating analysis of these interesting monuments, has concluded that three are of the Seljuk period, immediately preceding the Mongol conquest, that one is of the post-Mongolian period, and that only one, the Gunbad-i-Gaffaraiya, of the time of Sultan Abu Said Bahadour (1316-1336 A. D.), may be attributed to the Mongol epoch. This last tower, a square structure, whose broken top is now a nesting place for storks, represents the tomb of Shams-ed-Din Kara-sungur, renowned in his time as a great artificer of buildings in Egypt and Syria, who was exiled in his later years to Maragha where he died in 1328 A. D. It is the only one of the five tombs the identity of which is beyond question.



Of the other towers, one, the Gumbaz-i-Kirmiz, or Red Tower, which lies outside the town in a field, is dated 1147 A. D. Built in the form of a square, capped with a polygonal roof, this tower is one of the most interesting architecturally in Persia in the restrained use of color decoration—a taste which was to be expressed a little later not alone in the ubiquitous turquoise blue but also in glazed tiles of white and black and a variety of other colors. However, the free use of polychrome decoration did not become general until the time of the Sultan Ghazan.

In the center of the town itself are two towers adjoining each other, the one circular and the other polygonal, both of which Monsieur Godard has identified as Seljuk, or of the period immediately preceding the Mongols. The former is undistinguished except for its date, 1167 A. D., and the moving inscription from the Koran which it bears: EVERY MAN MUST TASTE DEATH.

The magnificence of the adjoining tower, the most elaborately decorated of the five, whose lower part, as Monsieur Godard has observed, gives the appearance of being enfolded by a texture of lace, has perhaps inspired the local tradition that it represents the tomb of the mother of Hulagu Khan. But, Monsieur Godard remarks, it appears highly improbable that a monument so characteristic of Islam should have been erected over a woman who is known to have been a Christian, while Hulagu himself, although a Buddhist, showed great favor to Christianity, both by reason of the faith of his mother and of the faith professed by one of his wives, a daughter of the famous Prester John, a Nestorian Christian. Indeed, the son and successor of Hulagu, Abaga, also married a Christian, a daughter of the Byzantine Emperor Michael Paleologue, and it was not until the reign of the Sultan Ghazan, great-grandson of Hulagu, that Islam became the accepted faith of the Mongol Il-Khan in Persia. Moreover, it may be recalled that the Polos on their first visit to the Court of the Great Khan, Khubla, were deputed by him to induce the Pope to send missionaries to instruct his subjects in the Christian faith. Although that opportunity was let slip by the Pope, it was long before the Powers of Christendom relinquished hopes of induc-

ing the Mongols to embrace Christianity by holding out to them the aid of the West against the most powerful foe of the Il-Khans, the Moslem Sultans of Egypt, who maintained control over the Holy Land.

Whatever this resplendent tomb in Maragha may represent, it cannot be that of any member of the family of Hulagu.\*

The fifth tomb, a circular tower beautifully decorated with raised bricks in geometrical designs, against which the walls of the houses of the villagers have been built in utter disregard of its importance, is attributed to the period immediately subsequent to the Mongol occupation, or about the middle of the fourteenth century.

Until the time of Ghazan the burial places of the Mongol Khans were kept secret. Hulagu died at Maragha in 1265 A. D. and is believed to be buried on the mountainous island of Tala or Shahi in Lake Rezayieh, being interred after the Mongol custom with a number of young and beautiful women, together with gold ornaments and precious stones. But neither the shores of the lake nor its islands have ever been adequately explored, so that Hulagu's tomb, as well as the treasure house constructed by him on the island of Tala and the tomb of his son and successor, Abaga, likewise said to have been buried on that island, await identification. Woodcutters who visit the islands have brought back reports of the presence on one of them of the tombs of giants, which might indicate, if not Hulagu's tomb, monuments of some historical interest.

Maragha's history, although reaching its apogee in the time of the Mongols, extends into a past far beyond that brief resplendent period. Some years ago an American scientific expedition discovered the remains of mastodons within its neighborhood, while the ash hills, which overspread western Azerbaijan and extend south through Kurdistan, give evidence of men of the Stone and Bronze Ages who made this rich pasture land their own. Reckoned in the light of the probable presence of men and

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\*It has since been found to be dated 1196 A. D.

mastodons as much as a hundred thousand years ago, the Mongols were but modern occupants.

### 5. *Tabriz*

Mention has been made of that geographical importance of Tabriz which, for so long, made it one of the chief trading centers of Asia. Marco Polo, at the close of the thirteenth century, alluded to the city as one where "the merchants make large profits." Ibn Battuta, the renowned Moslem traveler of the next century, described the Ghazan bazaar as "one of the finest bazaars I have seen the world over," while, as late as 1672, Chardin confirmed the earlier testimony of the much-traveled Battuta in observing that the city possessed "the fairest Basars that are in any place of Asia." In their cool interiors enclosed within graceful brick arches, the bazaars still constitute one of the most interesting and lively cross-sections of the life of Tabriz. But they have suffered both a restriction of space and a vast diminution of business since the time, only a little while ago, when their total length extended for almost thirty miles and when they were the focal point of caravans from India, Merv, Bokhara and of traders from the most western confines of Europe. Some further notion of the fluctuating fortunes of Tabriz as a trade center may be gained from various estimates made at different times of its population. In 1672 Chardin estimated it at five hundred and fifty thousand. In the middle of the last century before the opening of the Suez Canal the number of its inhabitants was reckoned to be three hundred and fifty thousand; today the most optimistic estimate does not exceed two hundred thousand.

From its proximity to the frontier Tabriz has passed variously into the hands of Armenians, Parthians, Arabs, Seljuks, Mongols, Turks and Russians. It was once the capital of the Armenian King Tiridates III, and a favorite residence of Zobeideh, wife of Haroun-al-Raschid. She caused the city to be rebuilt and beautified in 791 A. D. in gratitude for her cure of fever there, and it is to her that the origin of its name, from *tab*, fever; *riz*, scattered, or fever-scattering, is most plausibly assigned.

It was in Tabriz under Sultan Ghazan, not only the greatest of the Il-Khans but one of the most remarkable sovereigns who ever ruled in Asia, that in a suburb which became known as Ghazaniyeh a capital in the strict sense of the word was established for the first time by the Mongol dynasty ruling Persia. Under his successors, Sultans Khodabendeh and Abu Said, the capital was transferred to Sultaniya. But Tabriz was again adopted as a seat of government by the independent sovereigns of the Black and White Sheep Turcoman dynasties which ruled northern Persia fitfully between the decline of the Timurid power and the advent of the Sefavids. Sacked by Tamerlane (1369-1404 A. D.) on his triumphant march through Persia, Tabriz once more reassumed its position as capital for a brief period at the beginning of the reign of Shah Ismail, of the Sefavid dynasty, who, soon after his advent, shifted his seat of authority to Kazvin as a protection from the constant incursions of the Turks. With the rise of the Kajars at the close of the eighteenth century and the remoteness of the new capital, Teheran, from so isolated yet strategically important a center as Tabriz, it became customary for the Heir Apparent to fix his residence there upon coming of age. This tradition, introduced by Fath Ali Shah in 1805 in the case of his eldest son, Prince Abbas Mirza, ceased to be followed under the present dynasty, both by reason of the diminished strategic importance of Tabriz and Azerbaijan in the friendly atmosphere established with Persia by the new Turkey and by the Soviet Union, and also by reason of the strongly centralized administration which, under Reza Shah Pahlevi, has replaced the old loosely administered regime of the Kajars.

As a habitated site, Tabriz, "with its monotonous expanse of flat-roofed single-storied houses, broken only by the domed arches of the bazaars and the high wall of the ancient citadel," presents little of picturesqueness, as Jackson has observed. Its deficiency in this respect, contrasting with the strongly individual character of its sister cities, Ispahan, Shiraz, Kerman, Yezd, Kazvin and Meshed, may be attributed to its frequent visitation



by earthquakes and the great toll taken of its buildings on such occasions.

On this account the monuments of historic interest which have survived are few. But these, which include the citadel, the Blue Mosque, the tomb of Sultan Ghazan, and the suburbs of Rashidiyeh, whatever their fragmentary character, are of surpassing interest. Three of these monuments belong to the time of the great Ghazan, by whom the most far-reaching reforms were introduced in the administration of his dominions. Under his encouragement, the new capital was transformed into a city rivaling Merv, Balkh, Ray, Nishapur, Bokhara and Samarcand. It was a period of renaissance when the constructive genius of the Persians was summoned to repair the blind destruction wrought during the first birth pangs of Mongol power under Genghis. Under the inspiration of this new spirit architectural works were executed, and there was produced by the eminent prime minister of Ghazan, Rashid-ud-Din Fazlullah, a native of Hamadan, a universal history which has been characterized by the outstanding authority on Persian literature, Professor Browne, as probably the greatest of Persian prose works.

When, after the deaths of his father and uncle, Arghun and Gaykhatu, Ghazan hesitated to assert his rightful claim to the title of Il-Khan against the usurper, Baydu (1295 A. D.), he was admonished by his chief supporter: "Man must end by dying; since death is certain, let it be honorable." Ghazan, of the noblest spirit himself, needed no further inspiration to press on and to assert his authority successfully.

Rashid, a contemporary student of the history of the Mongols, said that the philosophical spirit of Ghazan induced him to endeavor to familiarize himself with every branch of knowledge and to excel in every calling, so that no one could manufacture more elegantly than he saddles, bridles, boots, sabers and helmets. He was also acquainted with medicine, was well versed in the natural history of animals, applied himself to the study of mining and was familiar with astronomy. He was especially informed in the

annals of the Mongols, and Rashid says that he derived inestimable aid from his sovereign in undertaking his own historical labors. Some notion of the philosophic temper of this great man is gained from his comment when on one occasion he asked his courtiers for opinions on the most grievous thing in life. Some said a defeat, others imprisonment, others poverty, sickness or death. Ghazan, when they were finished, remarked: "The most grievous thing is to be born at all, for life is but a string of misfortunes, closed by death."

Ghazan's fame extended far beyond the bounds of his own territories. He was solicited by the Byzantine Emperor to accept in marriage one of the Greek princesses. England, under Edward I, accredited to him Geoffrey de Langley, the first English Ambassador to a Court in Persia. It was Ghazan, moreover, who received from Marco Polo the Princess of the Royal House of the Great Khan whose hand had been sought by Sultan Arghun. Marco Polo was at the Court of the Great Khan when the embassy from Arghun arrived, and in 1292 A. D. he was charged with the responsible task of escorting the "extremely handsome and accomplished" damsel, Kogatin, to the Court of the Il-Khan in Persia to take the place of Arghun's wife. Before dying, her last request had been, as Marco Polo notes, that "no one might succeed to her place on his throne and in his affections, who was not a descendant of her own family, now settled under the dominion of the Great Khan." Marco, with Nicolo and Maffeo Polo, his father and uncle, respectively, were furnished with the golden tablet, or royal *chop*, the commission of the Great Khan, being besides authorized to act as his ambassadors to the Pope, "the Kings of France and Spain, and other Christian princes." Arriving from China by boat at Hormuz in the Persian Gulf in 1294 after a voyage of two years, the travelers found that Arghun had died in the meanwhile and had been succeeded by Gaykhatu (1291-1294 A. D.), his brother, and uncle of Ghazan. Having been charged by Gaykhatu with delivering the princess to Ghazan, then in eastern Persia, the Polos continued to the Court of Gaykhatu, presumably then at Maragha, "where

they reposed themselves for the space of nine months" before resuming the last part of their return journey to Venice by way of Trebizond and Constantinople.

The tomb of Sultan Ghazan in Tabriz once constituted, with the mausoleum of his brother, Sultan Uljaitu Khodabendeh, at Sultaniya, and a hitherto undiscovered tomb of the Sultan Arghun built by Ghazan, one of the three great Mongol monuments of Persia. Only a field of broken bits of tile and brick remains in testimony of its once proud and commanding situation.

There is something peculiarly tragic in the ruined vestiges of this mausoleum, the foundations of which were laid by Ghazan in 1297 A. D. After his conversion to Islam, Ghazan visited many tombs of the innumerable Moslem saints whose shrines were scattered over Persia. He is said to have been moved to the reflection that a man whose last resting place was thus revered was happier far than living men. That he might the better assure the conservation of his own tomb and might "have some part with these holy men," he resolved to associate with it a number of pious foundations and thus at the same time, as he said, secure "the divine pity." These pious foundations included a monastery for dervishes, two colleges, a hospital, a library, an observatory, a fountain, an establishment for descendants of the Prophet, and a philosophical academy. The mausoleum alone entailed the work of fourteen thousand and four hundred men. Its walls were a thickness of thirty-three bricks. Among the many objects of gold which it contained was a lamp weighing more than ten pounds. Of all these works not one remains. The endowments of the pious foundations by which he hoped to obtain "the divine pity" have alike been dissipated with the buildings themselves. Of the great tomb which he hoped would obtain him reverence, only broken fragments are left.

A contemporaneous drawing of Sultan Ghazan's tomb has been discovered in a manuscript *History of the Mongols*, now in the Bibliothèque Nationale, executed in Tabriz at the beginning of the fourteenth century for the renowned historian and prime minister of Ghazan, Rashid-ud-Din. It was the Sultan Ghazan

who first departed from the Mongol tradition of concealing the mausoleums of rulers. It was likewise in his reign that Islam became the accepted religion of the Il-Khans. The representation in the manuscript of the tomb in the form of a high tower surmounted by a cupola is, accordingly, fully in consonance with the traditional Islamic architecture of such structures.

Sir Robert Ker Porter, who passed through Tabriz in 1818, has left a description of the tomb as it existed in his day:

To the southwest of the new walls of the city, but far within the remnants of the old boundaries, stand the magnificent remains of the sepulchre of Sultan Kazan (Ghazan). . . . It is situated about two miles from the town, the whole way being marked with shapeless ruins, even stretching beyond the sepulchre to a great extent; but the tomb itself is too pre-eminent in desolated grandeur to desery without approaching. Its appearance now is that of a huge mound, of mingled lime, dust, tiles, and bricks; but surrounded with spacious arches of stone, and other vestiges of departed majesty.

Hardly less rudely have time and decay fallen upon that suburb of Tabriz known as Rashidiyeh which Ghazan's great minister caused to be built, consisting of a mosque, a college, a hospital and other public buildings. Their foundations, which represent a site known popularly as the Fort of Rashid-ud-Din, lie scattered over the hills abutting the range of mountains to the northwest of modern Tabriz. They comprise portions of a wall, the shell of a small structure surmounting a conical-shaped hill, and the ruins of a circular tower. The last is of particular interest as having been constructed, in part, with what appear to be large black tombstones of pre-Islamic origin. In a garden below the hill on which these vestiges rest are the outlines of the foundations of a building, while on one of the lower slopes is the site of the mosque, revealed by the presence upon the ground of fragments of polychrome tiles and alabaster.

The entire remains of the suburb of Rashidiyeh are but another reminder of the transient life of man, encountered on every hand



in that vast mausoleum known as Asia, and nowhere in more frequent or striking form than in Persia.

If time has dealt harshly with the material works of Rashid-ud-Din, it is as nothing compared with the perverse fate which has overtaken the productions of his surpassing intellect. Termed by Browne "equally eminent as a physician, a statesman, a historian and a public benefactor," Rashid, who served three successive Il-Khans, Ghazan, Khodabendeh and Abu Said, as grand vizier, was put to death by the last-named in 1318 A. D., owing to the machinations of a rival minister, Taj-ud-Din Ali Shah. Author of many works besides the *Compendium of Histories*, Rashid-ud-Din, as if overwhelmed by a sense of man's hapless transitory fate, adopted, but all in vain, the most elaborately contrived precautions "to preserve and transmit to posterity the fruits of his literary labors" (Browne). To that end he made available to his friends numerous complete manuscript copies of his works. Moreover, he provided funds for further copies to be made and distributed each year both in his lifetime and after his death from a complete set deposited in the library of the mosque built by him. Yet, as Browne has noted, "in spite of all these elaborate precautions we have lost the greater part of the works of this learned historian and all the measures which he took have not had a more fortunate success than the precautions devised by the Emperor Tacitus to secure the preservation of his illustrious relative's writings."

The fate of the architectural work left by the rival minister of Rashid-ud-Din, namely the ark or citadel, the most imposing structure in Tabriz, is, in a measure, emblematic of the temporal triumph of its builder. Erected, as it probably was, in emulation of the suburb of Rashidiyeh, it comprised originally both a mosque and a citadel, of which only the walls of the latter remain. These, however, some twenty feet in thickness and rising more than a hundred in height, give no less evidence than the mausoleum of Sultan Khodabendeh and the site of the observatory of Nasr-ud-Din Tusi at Maragha, of the majesty and might of the Mongols.

The last monument of Tabriz to be noted, the Blue Mosque, belongs to the period subsequent both to the Mongols and their successors, the Timurids, namely, to the Black Sheep Turcoman dynasty. Built by Jehan Shah, last sovereign of that line (1437-1469 A. D.), the mosque, now but the shadow of its former self, has been described as a chef-d'œuvre not only of Persian but of Islamic art. Enough remains of its consummately designed and colored glazed tiles and inscribed alabaster blocks to bewitch the eye and to confute those skeptics who would decry the art and civilization of the East.

#### 6. *Ardebil, Cradle and Tomb of the Sefavids*

It is not only as the former seat of authority of the Mongol Il-Khans that Azerbaijan and northwest Persia are of interest. At Ardebil, not far from the western shores of the Caspian Sea, is the cradle of the Sefavid dynasty, whose glories are comparable with the Achæmenian and Sassanian.

The road from Tabriz to Ardebil, some hundred and twenty-five miles in distance to the northeast, lies over the same rolling country which generally distinguishes northern Azerbaijan. Having passed through a succession of small villages, of which the most important is Sarab, the road ascends, some thirty miles west of Ardebil, by gentle stages a pass guarded by Mount Savalan, second highest peak in Persia, which rises to some sixteen thousand feet. It then descends into a spacious valley, the magnificent confines of which may be viewed for miles from the height of the pass, and reaches the pleasant village of Nir. Twenty-five miles beyond, Ardebil comes gradually into view, extended over the tableland of a wide valley.

The bazaars of Ardebil are interesting, although perhaps not so much so as those which have been left behind in the village of Sarab. There, however, one's way is apt to be impeded by the curious crowds who congregate to gaze at foreigners so infrequently seen in Sarab. But neither at Ardebil nor at Sarab are to be found any of the old exquisite carpets, brocades or

faience which distinguished the Sefavid period. The bazaars have long ago been stripped of their treasures which have been transported to Teheran for dispersion among antique collectors abroad. Perhaps something still remains in the homes of the more prosperous which may yet come to light. As long ago as 1870 Doctor Wills was lamenting in Ispahan that bargains in antiques in Persia were a thing of the past, and this was before some of the richest treasures of Persian art had been purchased for a song. If examples of Sefavid art still exist in the vicinity of Ardebil in private hands our persistent inquiries failed to bring them forth. Old coins of Parthia, of the Sassanians and of the Arab Conquest may be had, and occasionally some vessel of pottery or instrument of bronze of the prehistoric period of Persian history; that is all.

The oldest monument in Ardebil is a Seljuk mosque, the Mesjid-i-Jameh, whose ruins cover the crest of a hillock in the suburbs. In the center of the town is a citadel with walls of sun-dried brick, attributed by Morier to French engineers of the staff of General Gardanne's mission sent by Napoleon to Persia. At Gilkhran, a mile or two beyond, are the tomb and the dome-covered and tile-decorated shrine, constructed in the first half of the sixteenth century, of Sheikh Jibrail, father of Sheikh Sefi-ud-Din. But these structures one and all are subordinate in interest and in artistic execution to the great shrine and sepulchre of the renowned Sheikh Sefi, and the sepulchre of Shah Ismail, founder of the Sefavid dynasty.

Persia and the East generally have long been remarkable for men devoting themselves to mysticism and contemplation, men who, when of supreme spiritual power, have transformed by their example, in their own lifetime or after their death, the external aspect of that world over which they were given to brooding. With perpetual reminders of life's transitoriness and of the decay of man's most majestic material works, on the one hand, and, on the other, with constant evidence of that eternal struggle between the fruitful forces of the oasis and the death-dealing works of the desert, in Asia nature itself conspires with man to induce an absorption in the problem of his existence.

The sect of Sufis, who drew a mystical interpretation of the universe, developed early in Persia within the body of Islam. It was as one of its leaders that Sheikh Sefi-ud-Din began to attract notice to himself during the latter part of the thirteenth and the beginning of the fourteenth century, or at a time when the power of the Mongol Il-Khans was waning and was on the point of being diffused among a number of petty local dynasties. Such was the reputation acquired by Sheikh Sefi in his own lifetime that he was one of the honored guests of Sultan Khodabendeh when that monarch inaugurated, in 1310 A. D., the new capital of Sultaniya. He died in 1334 A. D. in Gilan in "the odor of sanctity." Taking into account his claim to descent from the seventh Imam, and considering the confusion into which Persia lapsed with the dissipation of the strength of the Mongol power after the death of Sultan Abu Said, one finds it not unnatural that more than usual reverence should come to be paid to the successors of Sheikh Sefi. As time went on and the power of the Timurids was succeeded by that of the conflicting rival claims in northern Persia of the Black and White Sheep Turcoman dynasties, the House of the Sefavids tended to gain recognition not only as the spiritual leaders of an increasingly important order of Sufis but as the legitimate repository of political power.

Sheikh Ismail had been left an orphan by his father, Sheikh Haydar, in 1490 A. D. In 1500, at the age of thirteen, he set out from Lahijan on the Caspian for Ardebil, with but seven of his followers, to assert the supremacy of the House of Sefavid, of which he was now the head, by the bold challenge of the sovereignty of the White Sheep dynasty in Tabriz. With the aid of those who hastened in thousands to his cause, within a year he had captured Tabriz, had been crowned Shah and had imposed the Shi'a doctrine of Islam on his subjects for the first time as the national religion of Persia.

Thus, Persia, for the third time in its history was ruled by a Persian dynasty which was destined for the space of two centuries to make its power felt, as the Achæmenian and Sassanian dynasties before it, far beyond the confines of Iran.



Adjacent to Persia in the west, however, were no longer those mighty empires of Assyria, Greece, Macedon or Rome which had disputed the supremacy of the Achæmenians and Sassanians, and one of which, Macedon, had brought about the overthrow of the first Persian national dynasty. In their stead was the growing power of the new Ottoman Empire, made up of descendants of those Turks who had been spewed many years before out of the maw of restless Asia and who, for a time, from 1037 to 1300 A. D., as the Seljuks, had even ruled over Persia from Nishapur and Ray.

Shah Ismail's introduction in Persia of the Shi'a faith of Islam, which repudiated the authority exercised over the Sunnis under the Caliphate (then vested in the Ottoman Sultans, residing since 1453 A. D. in Constantinople) seems primarily to have been a political move. In its consequences, nothing could conceivably have contributed more to the development of a Persian national spirit. It interposed an effective barrier to the assimilation of Turkish-speaking Azerbaijan on the northwestern frontier of Persia by the Sunni Ottoman Turks. Moreover, it brought about the assiduous courting of Persia by the nations of Europe and the zealous support of its independence so long as there was needed a counterpoise in the East to the power of the Ottoman Empire.

Nor is that all. With the collapse of the Ottoman Empire as a consequence of the World War and the subsequent disestablishment of the Sunni sect of Islam in the new Turkey, there has disappeared the political tension which existed for nearly five centuries between Persia and Turkey. Mustapha Kemal Pasha, leader of the new Turkey, welcomed the visit to Turkey in 1934 of Reza Shah Pahlevi, head of the new Persia, with something more than a conventional gesture of friendship. Thus, it may be said that with the disappearance of the menace of Turkey to Persia, there has disappeared the political *raison d'être* of the Shi'a faith. Accordingly, its more fanatical forms and observances, especially directed in the past to the cultivation of a spirit of hatred of the leading Sunni power, Turkey, are being discouraged, if not actually prohibited, by the new Shah, while its traditional

customs are being challenged by the authorities and one by one discarded.

As the power of the religious dignitaries of Shi'ism comes to be more and more undermined by Reza Shah Pahlevi, based as that power has been so largely on fanaticism and superstition, the Shi'a religion, introduced as the State religion of Persia four centuries ago by Shah Ismail, is being transformed into but the shell of its former self. With other man-made religions which may once have contributed to man's advancement but have since become a dead-weight on his emancipation, Shi'ism appears ripe and ready to be discarded for more scientific conceptions alone capable of enabling man to master his environment.

### 7. *The Sefavid Shrine of Ardebil*

In 1637 there passed through Ardebil the Embassy of the Duke of Holstein to the Sefavid Court at Ispahan, in the suite of which Adam Olearius served as secretary. This diplomat left behind him one of the most entertaining accounts extant of Persia in the seventeenth century, including one of the most exact descriptions of the Sefavid shrine at Ardebil as it then existed in all its magnificence. Olearius is notable also for having been the first to introduce into Europe translations of *The Gulistan* and *The Bustan* of Sa'di which, in his German text, were destined to exercise so great an influence upon the German romantic movement in literature and in art.

Olearius, however, was not alone concerned with literature and antiquities; he had likewise an eye for the humorous living present, as may be judged from certain of his anecdotes of Persian manners. Their particular interest is the indication which they afford of how little these manners have changed in the three centuries which have intervened. One of his companions entered a bazaar where slaves were offered for sale and where, according to Olearius, "he fell a cheapning of a Boy, about fifteen or sixteen years of age, who was handsome enough." As against the price of a hundred crowns put upon the boy, thirty-two were offered,

whereupon the owner, "giving the Boy a clap upon the buttocks," informed the prospective buyer "that that part of him was worth more." He recites also, as throwing light on the customs of the country, the story "of a Woman, who, desirous to part from her Husband, charg'd him with impotence. The Husband," according to Olearius, "desir'd the Judge to command the Woman to scratch his Back; whereto she reply'd, I have scratch'd thee so often, that I am weary of it, and thou wouldst never scratch me where it most itch'd."

Olearius, whose life was tormented by a disagreeable chief, was not disinclined to lend his ear to the complaints of the Augustine monks in residence at Ispahan, "of the debauched lives of some of our Retinue," of whom the most particular offender would appear to have been the Ambassador Brugman himself. Olearius, hastening immediately to convey the remonstrances of the monks to the Ambassador, found him, to his great embarrassment, in his room in the company of a notorious Armenian woman named Tullia. Poor Olearius was, in consequence, obliged to beat a speedy retreat and, to escape the Ambassador's resentment, was compelled to keep in hiding for some days. He was probably, however, not the first nor the last secretary of embassy to surprise his chief in a compromising position.

The Ardebil shrine, the outer courts of which are now under extensive restoration, lies almost in the center of the town. A large open court is entered through a picturesque arched gateway. From this interior a smaller court is entered leading into a final one giving immediate access to the shrine building itself. The sanctuary consists of an edifice of moderate dimensions whose exterior is elaborately ornamented with polychrome glazed tiles. Abutting the upper or western end are two circular domed towers whose walls are composed of glazed tiles in geometrical Kufic designs, the towers being built over the respective tombs of Sheikh Sefi and Shah Ismail, access to which is had from the interior of the shrine. A third and larger cupola to the south encloses the magnificent room in which the shrine's china, a gift of Shah Abbas the Great, and its library were formerly kept. At

the eastern end of the sanctuary, separated from it by a wall, are the remains of a very old mosque over which Sheikh Sefi is believed to have presided and where his particular devotions were made. So great was the veneration in which the shrine was held in the time of Olearius that before the members of the embassy were permitted to visit it they were obliged by order of the governor to abstain from wine on the day preceding their visit. Before being admitted through the gate of the first court, moreover, they were obliged to give up their arms.

From the description of the sanctuary left by Olearius I infer that the original extreme outer gate, a "very large one" over which there hung a great silver chain, has disappeared and that the shops now surrounding the present entrance were once the site of the "very spacious" court, having on both sides great vaults and "backwards a very fair publick Garden."\*

The first gate by which I entered, presumably once the second, possessed also at one time a silver chain, since replaced by an iron one. Olearius notes that the threshold of this entrance, "as also of the following Gates, was of white Marble, and round, and notice was given us not to set our foot upon it, but to step over it, the right foot foremost." No such prescription now exists. The observance of such a mark of respect is one, nevertheless, generally imposed in the Islamic world upon those entering mosques or shrines in active use.

"Thence," according to Olearius, "we enter'd into another Court, which was at least as long as the first, but much narrower . . . having vaults and shops on both sides as the other. On the right hand, there came out of the Wall, by a brass-cock, a fair Fountain." Since his day, however, the vaults and shops, as well as the fountain, have disappeared.

At the end of this court Olearius noted "a very fair and spacious Vault arched above," hung with tapestry and, in the middle, two candlesticks, while "along the walls sate several priests, cloth'd in white, who sung as loud as they were able." I could not identify this site unless it is now occupied by the small

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\*This has since been confirmed to me by Monsieur Godard.



separate bare court dividing the large outer entry from the court giving access to the shrine. In any case Olearius observed hanging over this third gate a third silver chain, existing no longer, which led into "another Court which was less than the two precedent" and was "pav'd all over with little square stones of several colors." Thence he entered the shrine by a gate "built like a great Tower, the Clappers whereof were all cover'd with plates of Silver." These last mentioned beautiful doors still remain as among the chief ornaments of a surpassingly rich edifice, rich even today after having been despoiled of a great part of its treasures. The pavement before the arched doorway, giving entrance to the shrine at the southeastern end of the court, was covered in the time of Olearius with carpets and here, he states, "we were told . . . we should put off our shoes," an admonition not, however, addressed to us three centuries later.

The richness of the interior decoration of the shrine may be best appreciated when it is recalled that here rested the great Ardebil carpet, made in 1540 A. D., now the pride and glory of the Victoria and Albert Museum in London, probably the finest example of a Persian carpet left in the world. It was disposed of some years ago, by the mullahs responsible for the maintenance of the shrine, for a few hundred dollars to a British firm in Tabriz, and by them sold, at a greatly increased price, to a private purchaser in the United States. From there it passed to the Victoria and Albert Museum for what was then a fabulous sum. Its present value is incalculable.

The first room of the shrine, of no large dimensions, is flanked on either side by three recesses surmounted by three arched galleries. In the time of Olearius the room was "enlightened by a great number of Gold and Silver Lamps," none of which remains, nor is the practice perpetuated, which he noted, of the reading of the Koran by twelve priests ranged on either side under the galleries.

From this room a smaller room was entered, separated from the first only by a silver latticed railing and by three steps, one of silver and the others of marble, all formerly having been of silver.

At the farther end of this second room, even more richly adorned than the first, another room was found similarly raised a little above that leading to it, and separated from it by a gold latticed railing. The grating of gold which formerly served as a door has been abstracted, although some portions of its frame have been recently recovered and restored to their place.

On the occasion of Olearius's visit, "the door of that Golden Rail was lock'd, and though the Ambassadors were very importunate to have it opened, yet could they not prevail, the Persians telling them, that the Laicks, even to the King himself, were not permitted to come within that place." The distinguished James Morier, author of *Hajji Baba*, who visited Ardebil in 1812 with the British Embassy of Sir Gore Ouseley, was likewise forbidden entry through the gold grating giving entrance into the circular tower which contains the tomb of Sheikh Sefi. Happily, no such restriction now exists upon the entrance even of non-Moslem infidels.

Both the interior walls and the inner surface of the cupola enclosing the tomb are exquisitely decorated in the most refined taste, extending to the ornamentation of the window and its grating. The tomb itself is incased in sandalwood inlaid with ivory and was formerly covered with various offerings, including a golden ewer, set with precious stones, the gift of the Emperor Hodayun of India, a lineal descendant of Tamerlane, who had been befriended by Shah Tahmasp, son of Shah Ismail. Needless to say, the ewer has gone the way of all other loose objects of precious metals.

Emerging from Sheikh Sefi's tomb, to the right, one beholds the sepulchre of Shah Ismail, likewise enclosed within a circular domed tower. If anything the decoration of this room is even richer and finer than that of Sheikh Sefi; certainly there is nothing comparable to either in even the great examples of Sefavid art in Ispahan represented by the Ali Kapu and the Chehel Situn. At the left of the tomb room of Shah Ismail is a room enclosing tombs of minor members of the Sefavids without particular interest.

Returning through the silver grated compartments we passed from the right center of the front room into an even more spacious apartment. Here was once the library of the shrine and here around the walls in specially carved niches conformable to the shape of the vessels was stored the priceless porcelain presented to the shrine by Abbas the Great. Similar niches on a smaller scale are to be seen in the Ali Kapu in Ispahan, but these at Ardebil cover the entire center walls and impart, in their graceful outlines, an artistic effect distinguishing in the highest degree this remarkable room. A great dome, whose inner surface is in the form of stalactites, covered with gold and blue leaf, serves as a ceiling. The dome is supported by eight arches enclosing galleries, while running above the floor are panels of blue figured tiles.

Nothing in the great art of the Sefavids exceeds the sheer beauty of the different rooms of this shrine. Upon it was lavished during two centuries all the loving care of the Sefavid monarchs who appear to have vied with one another in its adornment and beautification.

Like other important Moslem sanctuaries, that at Ardebil was at one time heavily endowed. In the time of Olearius a thousand pilgrims were fed daily from the kitchen maintained out of the funds of the endowment. It was, therefore, to fill a utilitarian use that porcelain was presented the shrine by Shah Abbas; its richness was out of respect for the memory of his ancestors, Sheikh Sefi and Shah Ismail.

With the collapse of the Sefavid power in the first half of the eighteenth century and the confusion attending the brief interregnum of Nadir Shah, the endowment was appropriated by others and the daily service of rice for the pilgrims discontinued. From that period must also be dated the gradual disappearance of the importance of the shrine as a place of religious pilgrimage. With the crushing defeat of Persia by Russia in 1827, the most precious of the manuscripts were seized for the Imperial Library in St. Petersburg. Those manuscripts which remained, together with that portion of the porcelain service of Shah Abbas which

has escaped the ravages of time and the cupidity of the guardians of the shrine, were removed in 1935 by the Persian Government to Teheran for eventual display in the new national museum.

The mosque of Sheikh Sefi, the oldest portion of the shrine enclosure, is attributed to a date between 1250 and 1300 A. D. According to Sarre, the tomb of Sheikh Sefi was the work of his son, Sadr-ud-Din, and belongs to the middle of the fourteenth century. The shrine and the tombs were embellished by all the succeeding Sefavids, and it would not surprise me if to Shah Abbas the Great is to be attributed the addition of the room of the shrine last described which served as a library and as a repository for the service of china presented by him.\* The monuments were last refurbished by Nasr-ed-Din Shah (1848-1896), while Reza Shah Pahlevi is now undertaking a restoration of the entire site, properly recognized by Kajar as by Pahlevi as one of the greatest historical treasures of the Persian nation.

#### 8. *From Tabriz through Persian Kurdistan*

From Tabriz, Kurdistan, which extends over the boundaries of three nations—Persia, Iraq and Turkey—may be reached in one of several ways. There is a direct route south of Lake Rezayieh through Maragha and Sauj Bulagh. There is a route northeast of the Lake through Marand and Khoy and thence south and west of the Lake through Rezayieh to Sauj Bulagh. Again, one may cross the Lake itself to Rezayieh by way of Sofian and Sharaf Khanch.

The second route, through Marand and Khoy, is the main channel of communication between Tabriz and Erzerum. I preferred, however, to choose a longer and more devious route than any of these three, namely, north from Tabriz through Marand to Julfa on the Soviet-Persian frontier and thence south to Khoy. I chose to follow this longer route for the reason that, in all probability, from Tabriz to Julfa this was the route taken by Mark Antony when he led his defeated Roman legions out of

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\*I have since learned that this room was, in fact, built in 1610 A. D. by order of Shah Abbas.



Persia into Armenia after unsuccessful battle with the Parthian power in 37 B. C. Other armies have passed this way: Medes and Scythians, Armenians, Sassanians, Arabs, Mongols, Turks and Russians. Most have left some reminder of their progress. Not so the Romans, unless it be the skeletons of the thousands remaining behind on the battlefields of Media Atropatene, modern Azerbaijan—fields that were bought because of their commander's thirst for personal glory. The power of Parthia exercised over Persia was long successful in withstanding the aggression of Rome, and Roman power never penetrated much into Persia beyond the buffer state of Armenia. Interesting evidence of this is to be had in the perpetuation, as the name of a mountain hamlet, of Ayni Rum, literally "the eye of Rome," in a pass of the Kurdish mountains southwest of Rezayieh near the present Iranian-Persian frontier, commemorating the site of an ancient Roman outpost.

Twenty-three miles north of Tabriz, alongside the Tabriz-Julfa Railway, which was constructed by Russians in 1913-14 but reverted to Persia as a gift of the Soviet Union in 1921, is Sofian, the first village of any size north of Tabriz. Some ten miles beyond are the ruins of a caravanserai, probably Sefavid, lying in a small and extremely verdant valley. The bare brown and slate-colored hills extending north of Tabriz are gradually left behind, the hills being increasingly covered with bright patches of greensward. Four miles farther, the crest of a gigantic natural bowl is reached from which Marand, and a series of green splotches representing villages, may be seen lying in an amphitheater worthy of gods or titans.

Marand, situated as it is in an extensive valley, surrounded by thousands of fruit trees, the dried produce of which forms an important staple of export trade of northwestern Persia with the U. S. S. R., is one of the most attractive villages of Azerbaijan. It was once of considerable importance, but as much as seven centuries ago Yakut, the Arab geographer, reported it as partly abandoned and falling into ruin owing to the ravages of the Turkish tribes. Moslem tradition has it that Noah's mother was

buried at Marand in a very ancient mosque which Morier thought might have represented originally an ancient Armenian church. It is covered with a series of small flat domes supported from within by immense pilasters of baked brick. The date of the construction of the original mosque, which is very old, is not known. An inscription records that it was reconstructed in 1330 A. D. by the Mongol Il-Khan, Sultan Abu Said, who caused the mihrab, of beautiful raised stucco work, to be executed by a Tabriz artist.

Seventeen miles north of Marand are the ruins of one of the most interesting structures in northern Azerbaijan, a Mongol caravanserai, not many of which now remain. The walls of the extensive structure in the form of a rectangle are partly intact, with round bastions at the corners. The entrance is formed of a large pointed arch at the summit of which is an inscription in Arabic letters in raised brick overlying blue turquoise tiles. This arch encloses a smaller rounded one serving as a gateway to the enclosure. The foundations are of very large stone blocks, while the entire façade of the entrance consists of strips of baked brick inlaid with turquoise blue tiles in geometrical designs. The route which it commands through the pass leading to Julfa, only twenty-four miles distant, and to Armenia, has always been of the highest strategic importance; hence its character as a fortified caravanserai.

As the road penetrates the narrow winding pass alongside the railway and emerges once again upon a plain, an awe-inspiring view is had of the gaunt and imposing mountains of Soviet Armenia. They rear their barren heads some thousands of feet above the River Aras, the line of demarcation in the north between Persia and the Soviet Union.

There is nothing to distinguish Persian Julfa, lying in the barren plain on the south side of the Aras, or that of its neighbor, Soviet Julfa, on the north side of the same river, unless it be the infernal and stifling heat which hangs over this region in the summer. It is produced by the reflection of the sun's rays from the barren mountains whose rocky sides enclose the great basin in the center of which the two Julfas are situated. Armenians were

transplanted from here to the suburb of Ispahan by Shah Abbas in the seventeenth century in order to denude the Persian-Turkish frontier, as it then was, and to form a no-man's land for the strategic protection of Persia against Turkey. They could hardly have been moved to regret the exchange of the pleasant gardens along the Zendeh Rud for a land so naturally desolate and forbidding. A railway bridge of iron girders forms a means of passage for the railway as well as for vehicles and foot passengers over the Aras. At the northern end paces a soldier of the Red Guard; at the southern end a Persian soldier of the King of Kings idly fingers his musket and surveys with unutterable boredom the cheerless wastes and the treeless and shrubless slopes of the near-by mountains.

Khoy, a crossroads of routes leading northwest to Turkey and the Black Sea, southeast to Tabriz, and south to Rezayieh, is fifty miles southwest of Julfa over an excellent motor road, built by Russia during the World War and traversing a very sparsely settled country. Six miles before Khoy and immediately before a bridge is crossed that leads into the village of Navahen, a track to the left along the river bank brings the traveler to an excellent spring of aperient water some three hundred yards beyond. If this spring were near Teheran it would make the fortune of the bottler.

In the village of Khoy were formerly two pillars or minarets of skulls, described by Morier as "the memorials of an extraordinary hunt of Shah Ismail, who is said in one day to have killed a multitude of wild goats, the heads and horns of which were arranged in thick lines around two pillars of brick." Only one of these remains, situated in the garden of a native in the western suburbs of the town. The tower, which is of brick, stands some eighty feet high, with many of the trophies of the chase of the first of the Sefavid monarchs still embedded in the brick.

A similar tower, Tavernier tells us, once stood in Ispahan, the product of a great hunt made by Shah Sefi for the entertainment of the Ambassadors of Tartary, Moscow and India. While the meat of the animals was being consumed at a great feast which

concluded the chase, an architect was summoned and ordered to make ready at once in the center of Ispahan a tower of the heads of the beasts taken in the hunt. Tavernier states that the tower having been raised to a reasonable height, the architect, "full of good spirits," went to find the King, who was eating with the Ambassadors, to apprise him that there was lacking for the perfect symmetry of the work only the head of some great beast of which to make the summit of the column. "You are right," the Shah, the most cruel of all the Sefavids, is reported to have observed; "and," he added, "there could not be found a head more appropriate for the purpose than your own." Upon which the unhappy architect was immediately executed and his own head placed to adorn the tower which he had designed.

From Khoy to Shapur, thirty miles, the road follows an excellent highway through increasingly beautiful scenery, an introduction to the grandeur of the mountains extending from the northern Persian border south through Kurdistan and Luristan to Khuzistan and the Gulf. The mountains as a rule are higher and greener than those on the central Persian plateau, the hillsides serving as grazing lands and the more verdant valleys as pastures for cattle. Here in these isolated hills in the last pass before one descends into Shapur, the Reverend B. W. Labaree, of the American Presbyterian Mission, was murdered in 1904 by Kurds.

Shapur is a new town, illuminated with electricity, and spread upon a plain, built since 1930 to replace the earthquake-stricken town of Dilman, whose ruins lie to the south. The new Hotel Firdausi, whose foundations, in common with other buildings in Shapur, are sustained by large posts set deep in the ground as a protection against the earth tremors with which this region is so frequently visited, offers no comforts comparable to those in the West. Accordingly, we spread our cots on the roof under the light of a moon which came up over a mountain range to the east and suffused Shapur with a softer mellower light than its electricity. It was a magical scene. The cries and hum of Eastern voices in the street below, and the strange shadows cast over the town by the moon's light, gave Shapur a glamour which was



quickly dissipated in the gray morning; then the town was revealed as but another assembly of sun-dried and baked-brick, squat, low houses characteristic of Persia. But there was a good breakfast of excellent honey and of fresh eggs and tea awaiting us, following upon a very good dinner the evening before of pilau and sour milk. The entire bill for the three of us was only fifteen rials, or less than one dollar,—and at that the proprietor undoubtedly rejoiced over his ability to obtain from us double the amount he would have charged a Persian.

Fifteen kilometers or nine miles south of Shapur is Surat Daghy, meaning, literally, "picture mountain." Here, to the left of the road, where a mountain range descends in a point almost to the highway, are two Sassanian sculptures, one alongside the other, depicting two victories over Armenians. The face of the rock has been smoothed away some distance above the level of the ground to make way for two sculptured figures on horseback in the conventional dress of the Sassanians before each of whom an Armenian monarch pays obeisance on bended knee. The figure on horseback to the left is Ardeshir and the one to the right, Shapur I, the first and second of the great Sassanian line of Persian kings.

Rounding the point of rock a view is had of the northwest end of Lake Rezayieh, its surface the color of turquoise. Seventy-five miles long and from thirty to fifty miles wide, the Lake is the largest body of water in Persia and the fourth largest landlocked body of water in Asia, being exceeded in size by only the Caspian Sea, the Aral Sea and Lake Baikal. The road now descends into a narrow valley and re-ascends the mountain slopes by the winding Gaduky Pass where two days previous to our visit a Persian motor truck had been attacked by Kurds. From the top of the Pass an even more extensive view is to be had of the Lake, in whose proximity the road will continue as far as Haiderabad, one hundred miles distant at the southwestern extremity of the Lake.

Thirty miles from Shapur in a valley abutting upon the Lake are the villages of Jamalabad and Gavelan. In this general vicinity along the western shores of the Lake and in the region about

Mosul in Iraq are a hundred thousand or more Christians. They represent all that are left of a once famous sect which was adhered to by the mother and a wife of Hulagu, which was favorably regarded by the Great Khan of the Mongols, and whose numbers and influence extended to the farthest reaches of Asia.

When Nestorius, Patriarch of Constantinople, was excommunicated by the Third General Council of the Church at Ephesus in 431 A. D., for holding the heretical opinion that Christ represented two natures and two persons, his followers took refuge in Persia where, under the Sassanians who were then in constant rivalry with Rome, scattered bands of Christians were already established. From Persia their faith was spread over the face of the East by missionaries who penetrated to the heathen and Buddhist peoples of Afghanistan, Turkestan, India, Mongolia and China. Their episcopal sees included the desert city of Kerman in eastern Persia, Ahwaz in the south, and other centers such as Merv, Herat, Samarcand, Kashgar and even Peking, extending from the Mediterranean to the Pacific. These strongly knit and increasingly influential Christian communities scattered over Asia survived the Arab Conquest in the seventh century. The Mongols, hesitating between the adoption of Mohammedanism and Christianity, showed them great favor and it seemed for a time in the thirteenth century that Nestorianism might supplant Mohammedanism in Asia. Tamerlane, however, fell upon them with fury, and the stricken remnant finally found refuge in the isolated mountain region west of Lake Rezayich and northeast of Mosul.

In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries a portion of the western Nestorians adhered to the Church of Rome, forming what was known as the Chaldean Church. The titular patriarch of the Persian Nestorians, or Assyrians as they are more commonly known, the Mar Shimun, long resided in Kachannis, now in Iraq. He is always chosen from the same family, the male members of which are forbidden to eat meat or to marry so long as they may be candidates for the succession. The Assyrian women go unveiled. The kindly, friendly greeting given us by the villagers in Gavelan was in some contrast with the rude staring

crowds which usually assembled around our car in similarly remote Moslem villages to gaze their fill upon the infidel Christian dogs.

Since the war the Assyrians have fallen upon evil days, whether it be across the border in Iraq where they were massacred in large numbers in 1933, or in western Persia where their presence in such close proximity to the Iraq and Turkish borders is viewed with considerable misgivings by the Persian Government.

These apprehensions contributed in 1934 to the government's closing of the station of the American Presbyterian Mission which had been maintained in Rezayieh for just one hundred years, whose work had been initially entitled "Mission to the Chaldeans," and whose activities had been principally directed among the Chaldean or Assyrian Christians. It is of interest to note also that it was the repeated attacks of the Kurds on Rezayieh, Sauj Bulagh and Salmas in the last century, gravely endangering the lives of the members of this mission, which occasioned the authorization by Congress in 1882 of the establishment in Persia of the first permanent American diplomatic mission at Teheran.

No later than 1919 Gordon Paddock, American Consul in Tabriz, risked his life when passing through Kurdish rifle fire fourteen miles below Gavelan. He was on his way in a rickety Ford car with an American missionary to rescue members of the mission besieged in Rezayieh. In the same neighborhood, adjoining the Lake, is the village of Spurghan where Christian grave-stones are found dating from about the fourteenth century.

Rezayieh, seat of the Governor of western Azerbaijan, is thirty miles south of Gavelan and some few miles west of the Lake. The most prominent modern buildings in the town were once the property of the American Mission, and now serve as government offices. An extremely old Nestorian Church is pointed out near the former American College building. I could learn nothing of its age, but its cool underground crypts offer a refreshing retreat from the intense heat of summer in Rezayieh.

In the heart of the small but interesting bazaars of the town is

an equally old but far more ornate Moslem place of worship. Its chief glory is a magnificent mihrab of stucco work, one of the finest examples of such work I had seen in Persia. Around the inner circumference of the domed room is an inscription in red and white, while around the cornice of the walls is a Kufic inscription in black letters. Similar inscriptions in black, imparting that artistic decoration to which Arabic characters so readily lend themselves, enclose false panels on all sides of the room.

Bureaucracy could not be extended much farther than it was carried by a representative of the Ministry of Public Instruction in Rezayieh. He interrupted my visit to the mosque in company with a representative of the police to inquire regarding my identity and my right to view the mosque, and cautioned me that I could take no photographs of it without special permission. His officious bearing was annoying enough but, for all my rising temper, I could not restrain a chuckle when he declined to give me any information regarding the history of the mosque without the special authorization of the chief of police in Rezayieh. In Teheran, through the usual kind offices of the Ministry of Public Instruction, I learned that the mosque dates from 1272 A. D., the period of Mongol occupation of Persia.

On every side of Rezayieh, surrounding the Lake and extending through the valleys for a great distance south, are great tumuli or hills of ashes which the Zoroastrian scholar, Professor Williams Jackson, on his notable journey through Azerbaijan before the war, believed to represent early Zoroastrian sites. Actually, they far antedate the sixth century B. C. when Zoroaster is commonly considered to have made his way from his home in the neighborhood of Lake Rezayieh to preach his new faith among the Bactrians in eastern Persia and eventually to find a convert in Hystaspes, father of Darius, and even in Darius himself. Excavations of these hills have disclosed bronze instruments and fine examples of pottery suggestive of the presence of an unidentified early civilization in northern and western Persia perhaps contemporaneous with early Elam and Sumer. An excellent example of one of these ash hills is to be found in the village



of Geug-Teppe lying to the left of the road some five miles south of Rezayieh on the way to Sauj Bulagh. The hill, about which the village is clustered, is now surmounted by the ruins of a modern Russian church.

The vicinity of Rezayieh is unusually fertile, and rows of handsome old trees are passed on the road south. Nineteen miles south of the town the Lake comes into view again, the shade of the trees surrounding Rezayieh is left behind, and the verdure of the hills in its neighborhood is replaced by a short desert shrub where neither the wheat nor the fruit produced in such great abundance near Rezayieh may find sustenance. The road now passes almost along the Lake's edge for a distance of some thirty miles to its southwestern end. In a number of attempts to approach the water's edge on foot I sank in a thick mucous substance, the thin upper crust of which is of a saline whiteness which, when broken through, discloses a sticky sulphurous-smelling substance of an ashy gray color. No fish can subsist in the Lake owing to its saline character. This evil-smelling substance lining the Lake's shore represents, I am informed, the remains of animalcules cast up by the Lake.

Forty-three miles south of Rezayieh the road reaches the extreme southwestern limits of the Lake at the small port of Haiderabad, whence a highway leads to the west through the Rowanduz Gorge to Mosul and Iraq. Twenty-seven miles south of Haiderabad lay our destination for the day, Sauj Bulagh, in a small narrow valley close to the heart of Kurdistan.

The most interesting feature of this small town, where we found lodging with American Lutheran missionaries, is the native life of the bazaars, always a place of fascination in Persia. Here the curious turned-up leather shoes of the Kurds may be purchased, as well as the gaily colored and gilded skull-shaped caps of the women. It is only within the past five years that security has been introduced into the lives of the inhabitants of Sauj Bulagh, harassed from immemorial times by Kurdish raids. Five years ago the town was raided by followers of the fearless Kurdish chief, Simko. But Simko has now been put to death, and the

tents of the nomadic Kurds have been burned, and their owners settled in villages by the Persian Government. But like the Lurs, their kinspeople, and the Bakhtiari in other remote parts of Persia, the Kurds continue to maintain a remnant of their distinctive dress: the men, their baggy balloon trousers and turned-up shoes; the women, their silver bangles, hanging from their ears, their neck or their headdress. The Shah's orders, a few weeks before my visit, for the abandonment throughout Persia of the Pahlevi hat and the adoption of the European hat by men, and for the abandonment of the veil by the younger generation of women, have but little affected Sauj Bulagh and Kurdistan. The women, except in the towns, have always gone unveiled, while the men generally, at least in the hills, had never adopted the Pahlevi hat.

It was interesting to observe, nevertheless, that the Pahlevi hat had almost completely disappeared from the heads of Persian townspeople in this as well as in other remote centers of population in western Persia. But the fanatical spirit lingers long in these isolated regions. The Kurds are Sunnis in contradistinction to the Persian Shi'as. In the mosque each Thursday evening an order of dervishes in the town—in civil life, shoemakers, carpenters or merchants—assemble to perform their peculiar rites which include self-mortification by the eating of glass.

The identity of the Kurds is one of the unsolved problems of ethnology. Generally accepted as Aryans and closely related to their southern neighbors, the Lurs, the Kurds, inhabiting both sides of the great mountain range that extends roughly north and south from the Caucasus to the Tigris, have succeeded in preserving their identity through all the waves of conquest which have passed over or near their mountain homes. They are recorded as residing in their present homeland from as early as 2,000 B. C.; their forefathers descended upon the tableland of Mesopotamia and governed Babylonia from 1800 to 1200 B. C. In Achæmenian times they were among the privileged guardians of the temples of the Magi. They proved the greatest thorn in the way of the retreat of the Ten Thousand Greeks under Xenophon. They fought the Seleucids. They were distinguished for their

valor under the Sassanians. And they soon broke away from their Arab conquerors to form the independent Kurdish kingdom of Shahrizor at Yassin Tepéh from the eleventh to the sixteenth century. It has remained for Shah Reza Pahlevi, as the symbol of modern progress, to disperse their tents, after the maintenance uninterruptedly of their indigenous mode of life since the dawn of history, to alter their ways which have represented, in small, a museum of ancient Aryan culture, and to engulf them in the body politic and in the ways of the modern world.

Although Sauj Bulagh itself is a very ancient habited site there are no monuments in the town of historical interest. To the north, however, near Indirkash are the ruins of a settlement which may be the Median Darayavan mentioned by Ptolemy. Thirteen miles to the southeast in the village of Karaftu is a cave enclosing a Median tomb.

Senna, or Sanandaj, capital of the Persian province of Kurdistan, may be reached by a road leading directly southeast to Boukan now under improvement, or by the longer, less direct route through Miandoab, thirty miles to the northeast, and thence south thirty-six miles to Boukan.

Miandoab, meaning "between two rivers," a city dusty beyond description in the summer, and with heavy layers of dust surrounding it for miles in the sun-baked desert plain in which it lies, is interesting as containing a Median tomb, as well as an inscription in cuneiform characters of the time of the Assyrians whose empire fell before the Medes in 612 B. C.

From Miandoab for sixteen miles the road passes through a desert valley unrelieved by the presence of any settlement or of any green thing. There follows thereafter a succession of small villages of parched appearance in this bleak region. Thirty miles from Miandoab there are passed in quick succession the hamlets of Mustapha and Aliabad, which have all the appearance of having been built on ancient ash hills, as does also Boukan, six miles beyond Mustapha. Twenty-three miles south of Boukan is Sakviz, spread over the hillside overlooking the Jaghutu River, and twelve miles farther is Sahab which appears to be another of

those prehistoric ash hills which distinguish all this countryside.

Some distance below Sakkiz the road ascends a great plateau, a kind of super-plateau, imposed as it is upon the great main Persian tableland. Nothing in Persia exceeds the beauty of the mountains from this road. Their great summits alone are visible, rearing their heads in isolated grandeur on either side of the route. The road, although only a hard beaten track, is a good one, but little used if the weeds overgrowing its center may be taken as evidence. Only one or two cars were passed by us all the way from Miandoab to Senna, a distance of some two hundred miles. The country is very sparsely settled; for, except in the lower valleys, little can be raised at these heights.

In the late afternoon the great super-plateau which we had been traversing was succeeded to the south by broken mountain ranges which cut across it and necessitate winding descents and ascents. We were now in the very heart of Kurdistan, and as the shadows lengthened my wife glanced nervously over the valleys and along the hills for a sight of Kurdish brigands. It grew dark, pitch dark, and we were yet twenty-five miles from Senna. We entered a village, Husseinabad, enclosed in a narrow valley, after a particularly dangerous winding descent. Dogs howled at us, voices were raised, and we were about to drive past the village when a man leaped suddenly in front of the car, brandished a gun and commanded us to stop. Our first thoughts were of Kurdish marauders, but his uniform of a Persian road guard reassured us.

After inquiries as to our identity and an examination of our papers we were politely informed that we must rest in the village until dawn. Kurdish villagers peered into the car; we looked beyond the car's lights and saw only mud-brick huts. We protested and begged to be permitted to proceed to Senna, where some semblance of hotel accommodations might be had. We were cautioned that the road was particularly dangerous, both in its precipitousness and in the possibility that lurking brigands might observe the lights of our car from afar off and be attracted to hold us up. For Kurdistan is the Chicago of Persia.



We glimpsed a pleasant grove of trees along the road and determined with some misgivings to spread our cots under them and to pass the night there. Kindly Persians of the road-guard detachment and the Kurdish owner of a little mud tea house assisted in making us comfortable and in preparing for us a dinner of sour milk, tea, eggs and pilau. This I supplemented with a cheering spot of whisky and this we consumed while seated on our cots under the shadows of the friendly trees and inhabitants of Husseinabad. It was all quite romantic, although I reflected that there would be nothing romantic in being held up and prevented from entering Chicago at night.

The coquettish and sparkling-eyed wife of the Kurdish owner of the tea house awakened us in the morning to inquire whether we desired eggs and tea for breakfast. She would create a furor in Chicago or anywhere else; here in Husseinabad she is merely the second wife in the harem of her Kurdish husband. I forgot all the antiquities I had ever seen in gazing upon this animated object of our own times.

Senna, set like an emerald in the valleys surrounding it, lies twenty-five miles beyond. But I had lost my interest in searching for old monuments of a vanished past. I gazed distractedly at a reconstructed mosque built in 1193 A. D. and responded apathetically to the welcome so graciously given me by the Governor, Prince Asadollah Mirza Shams-i-Molkara. He expressed high amusement at our adventures of the evening before and, waving with his hands and gesticulating, exclaimed: "What a people you Americans are! What a nation! What a people! One would think you would be content with your twentieth-century comforts. But no, you must go everywhere, search out everything. You are even happy to come to Kurdistan and to sleep under the stars. What a people!"

I thought of that Kurdish girl in Husseinabad and I looked at the Governor. Somehow I felt he would understand if I told him about her, but I remained silent and let him continue:

"You Americans are half mad, but all the same I like you and I have great friends among you. There is Doctor Packard of

the American Mission in Kermanshah, who once told me he had performed thirty thousand operations. Thirty thousand operations. What a man! Why, he finds his greatest joy in butchering people! What a man! What a people!"

The main highway from Baghdad to Teheran may be reached from Senna by way of Hamadan, one hundred and five miles, or at Tak-i-Bostan, just north of Kermanshah, a distance of ninety miles. We chose the latter course, an excellent road through the same mountainous country which was becoming less and less verdant. By the late afternoon we were seated on the veranda of the Grand Hotel in Kermanshah, sipping cool drinks, while my thoughts wandered back to Husseinabad and, incidentally, to the ancient glories of Azerbaijan. That night I dreamed I was a Kurd with four wives and forty concubines. Now there are a people for you, the Kurds. What a nation! What a people!

## CHAPTER IX

### BAGHDAD TO TEHERAN THROUGH KERMANSHAH, HAMADAN AND KAZVIN

#### *1. The Route in History*

THE traveler, who, in the clement weather of the late spring, summer and early autumn, passes rapidly in two days by motor from Baghdad to Teheran, has little appreciation either of the difficulties attending the traversing of this route in winter or of the even greater difficulties encountered during all seasons of the year only a few years ago when the way was only a caravan trail.

A carriage road built by the Rusisans some few years before the war extended from Teheran to Kazvin and as far as Hamadan. Not until the appearance of British forces on a line of communications established in 1918 between Baghdad and Kazvin, however, was a serviceable highway, suitable for motor vehicles, constructed over the ancient caravan trail which, from remote times, had joined Baghdad with Hamadan and beyond.

With the subsequent improvement of this main highway, forming a principal means of entry from the west upon the Persian plateau, the route became, with that through the Caucasus to Baku and thence to Resht and Kazvin, one of the two most important ways of communication between Europe and Persia.

It is only within the last century, consequent upon the transfer of the Persian capital from Ispahan and Shiraz to Teheran that the route has assumed a position of first importance. Although from the earliest times one of the principal means of access from the west to the great Persian plateau, it was, owing to the insecurity and discomfort of travel across the Syrian desert, long subordinate to the more easily traversed routes from Turkey or Russia to Tabriz, or, in even more recent years, to that from the Gulf.

Semiramis and the Babylonians and Assyrians frequently followed this route in their journeys from Mesopotamia to the cool highlands of Persia. Alexander, in his triumphant entry into Persia from southern Mesopotamia or Iraq to Susa and thence to Persepolis and Pasargadæ, made Hamadan his objective. From Hamadan, ancient capital of the Medes, the Achæmenian kings passed frequently from their sojourn in the summer to their principal capital at Babylon. So likewise the Parthians and Sassanians whose principal capital was at Ctesiphon on the Mesopotamian tableland.

Moreover, the route from Ray, near modern Teheran, to Baghdad was the principal and the most direct means of communication during the period of the Arab Conquest between the far-flung territories of Islam in central Asia and the seat of the Caliphate, first established at Medina and Mecca, subsequently shifted to Damascus and finally to Baghdad.

Under the Sefavids when the capital of Persia was situated for a brief period at Kazvin on this same highway, the route from Baghdad to Hamadan or Kazvin continued to be one of the means of communication from the west, although considerably less traveled than that from Tabriz in the north to Kazvin, or that from the Gulf in the south. However, with the transfer of the capital to Ispahan in 1598 and the diversion of traffic to north and south routes, Kermanshah languished as a center, as did Hamadan to a lesser extent. Their revival dates from the transfer of the capital to Teheran on the great east-west highway across Persia and, more especially, from the opening of a motor highway from Baghdad to Teheran.

Happily, along this ancient way are still conserved some of the most interesting memorials and striking reminders of the great names and of the great dynasties associated with the history of Persia, particularly of the Medes, the Achæmenians, Parthians, Sassanians and Sefavids.



*2. Baghdad to Kermanshah*

For all its romantic flavor, the present city of Baghdad possesses less of interest in the form of monumental remains, and less of that magnificence commonly associated with great eastern cities, than any comparable old town of the Near or Middle East. The shimmering domes and the splendors of the Court of the Abbasid Caliph Haroun-al-Raschid are gone the way of most material things of the past in the East where nothing is certain, nothing durable, "where everything is liable to impromptu changes—men as well as things" (Ferrier). For, in Baghdad, the only suggestion of the magic atmosphere of the *Arabian Nights* is that to be found in the modern aerodromes of the Dutch, French and British air lines.

A train, if not a modern airplane, is available for the trip from Baghdad to Khanikin, an overnight journey, to the Persian border or, if the weather is clement, the distance may be covered in some three hours by motorcar across a dull uninteresting flat expanse of desert. Seven miles beyond Khanikin, the railway terminus, is the Persian frontier post at Khosrovi, surrounded, when I first saw it in winter, by a miserable sea of mud.

From Khosrovi the long climb begins at once from the tableland of the vast desert which has been left behind to the great Iranian plateau. The first view had of the mountains conveys an impression of indescribable grandeur, their impressiveness being accentuated by their completely barren and lofty appearance and the absence of any visible life or human activity. This is the great Zagros range of mountains which, with the Elburz in the north and like mountain ranges in the south and east, have given Persia throughout history the character of a natural fortress. Through the Paytak and Assadabad Passes which lie ahead most of the armies of the ancient and modern world, which have ventured to assault Persia, have at one time or another passed in their great parades.

Fifteen miles from Khosrovi in the foothills of the mountains is Kasr-i-Shirin, now a quarantine station surrounded by mud

houses, but once the site of one of the most famous palaces and pleasure resorts of Chosroes Parviz II, one of the last and one of the greatest of the Sassanian kings. Many and widespread are the monuments testifying to the might and glory of that sovereign who for so long successfully defied the power of Rome and whose territories at one time extended to the Mediterranean, including even Egypt. In addition to the great grotto at Tak-i-Bostan near Kermanshah, this King, who, among other exploits carried off the "true cross" from Jerusalem, left a resplendent palace whose walls still stand on the edge of the desert at Mishetta in Transjordan.

The name, Kasr-i-Shirin, is derived from that of Chosroes' wife, Shirin, daughter of the Byzantine Emperor Maurice, celebrated in Persian song and story for her romantic and illicit love for Farhad, architect of Tak-i-Bostan. Even the severest moralist may find it difficult to withhold some measure of sympathy for her in view of the fact that her husband possessed a harem of twelve thousand women.

The palace of Chosroes at Kasr-i-Shirin, now only a confusion of walls and disarranged stones, was originally set in a magnificent park of some three hundred acres, surrounded by a variety of pavilions, fountains and artistically arranged streams of water brought by aqueduct from the River Hulwan. Included in the royal domain were game preserves where the rarest animals lived in semi-freedom. Yakut, the Arab geographer of the Middle Ages, described the great park and its buildings as "one of the wonders of the world." Yet only thirteen years after the death of the mighty Chosroes II Persia succumbed to the wave of the Arab invasion. The palace fell into disuse, its hastily constructed character having destined it for the usual fate attending the palaces of even the greatest monarchs of Persia and Asia.

Some twelve miles east of Kasr-i-Shirin, the road traverses the village of Sarpol, site of the ancient Khalmanu of the Assyrians, and the Hulwan of the Arabs which derived its name from the adjacent river. Here on either side of the river are important mounds, the debris of the Sassanian and still older civilizations.

Commanding as it does the entrance to the Paytak Pass (fifty-three hundred feet), Sarpol's great age as a habited settlement is attested by the presence of two sculptures almost five thousand years old. One of these represents the King Anu Banini, with left foot placed on the body of a captive, receiving from the goddess, Innina, two prisoners, of whom one is chained by the nose. These two bas-reliefs, which have been dated to 2800 B. C., are some one hundred feet above the level of the ground on a rock *within sight of the road where the range of mountains inclines to permit the passage of the river.* Here also is a third bas-relief bearing the name of Ardabanus (209-226 A. D.), last of the Parthian kings, who fell before the rising Sassanian dynasty.

Farther on another Parthian monument, the Tak-i-Gerreh, taking the form of a vaulted grotto constructed of large dressed stones, is passed on the left of the road along the steep ascent of the Pass. Unique in character, it has been interpreted by Flandin as a place of repose for the Parthian sovereigns, while Godard has related its construction to the marking of the western confines of the Median province of Parthia. The explanation of its purpose first suggested by the English traveler, Buckingham, in 1829, would seem the most disingenuous and probable explanation. He compared it to a similar monument on the Roman road at Nahr-el-Kelb which he saw in Syria, and which bore an inscription recording the occasion of its building as that of the commemoration of the completion of a road.

In this vicinity also Buckingham noted the presence of a "people called Nessercah" who inhabited at one time the mountains of Kurdistan but had been forced to settle at Kerind. They were distinguished for the observance annually of a saturnalia, representing probably a custom of the highest antiquity. "At their annual feast," Buckingham observed, "it is said they all meet in a room, where after some ceremonies performed by their chief, the lights are put out, and every female takes off her drawers and hangs them on a place in the wall. The men then enter, and each takes down a pair of these drawers, still in the dark, when, the light being renewed, the owner of each garment is sought out, and

she becomes the partner of the man who possesses it for the night."

Dr. John Fryer, who visited Persia a century and a half previous in 1677 attributed the observance of a comparable custom to the Zoroastrians or Gaures as they were then called. He wrote:

For there are some of them Couple together in their Sacred Feasts (as they term them) promiscuously . . . and the better to perpetuate their Incestuous Lusts, they put out the Lights, and shifting themselves stark naked, both Men and Women, the Men cast their breeches on a heap in a Corner to catch as catch can; and whatever Lot they light on, the Lamps being again lighted, they freely embrace for their Lover.

That such annual saturnalia existed in Persia until a comparatively recent time among an obscure portion of the population would seem to be confirmed by these two independent testimonies. It appears most probable, however, that both these travelers have erroneously attributed its practice to two different sects when it should, in fact, have been identified with the Yezidis or so-called Devil-Worshippers. These people, scattered at one time over the Caucasus, Armenia and Kurdistan, although nominally Mohammedans, as are the Nossereahs, have preserved a compound of superstitions and ancient practices embodying a mixture of Zoroastrianism, Manichæism, and the ancient Assyro-Babylonian worship of the heavenly bodies, some of which probably go back to the childhood of the human race. Relics of such saturnalia, generally held in the spring and occasioned by the confused primitive notion of making nature more fertile, are found by ethnologists in European and particularly in Slavic folklore.

### 3. *Kermanshah and Tak-i-Bostan*

Kermanshah, the first town of importance on the route from Baghdad to Teheran, is some one hundred and twenty miles east of Khosrovi. Lying within the southern confines of Kurdistan, it possesses neither buildings nor monuments of the slightest his-



toric interest. It is first heard of in the time of the Sassanians when it was a suburb of the locality known as Kambadene, which extended over the plain in which it is situated to the mountains northeast of the town. Its present name is believed to have been given it by the Sassanian, Bahram IV (388-399 A. D.), who, before his elevation to the throne of the Persian Empire, was ruler of Kerman.

With the establishment of the Caliphate at Baghdad in 762 A. D., Kermanshah became of greater importance and was often resorted to in the summer by the Caliphs, including in particular Haroun-al-Raschid. Upon the shift of political power to northwest Persia under the Mongol Il-Khans in the thirteenth century, Kermanshah began to lose its importance and relapsed into the character of a village from which it was resuscitated only at the beginning of the last century with the development of Teheran as the capital of Persia. With the establishment since the World War of motor routes across the Syrian desert linking the Mediterranean with Baghdad, and the building of a motor road between Teheran and Baghdad, Kermanshah has enjoyed a further new revival. The building of a refinery there in 1934-35 by the Anglo-Persian Oil Company, in accordance with the terms of the new concession granted that company by the Persian Government, is beginning to give this hitherto provincial town a pronounced industrial character. Thus, the modern industrial world of the twentieth century is rearing its head here almost in juxtaposition with one of the most interesting survivals of Sassanian art in Persia, that preserved in the sculptures and grottoes lying under the mountains at Tak-i-Bostan within sight of Kermanshah.

Tak-i-Bostan, meaning literally "grottoes of the garden," comprises a series of grottoes and rock sculptures cut in the face of the rock of the mountain range which stands northeast of the great valley in which Kermanshah lies. The road to Teheran crosses the valley at Kermanshah and proceeds immediately to the hamlet of Tak-i-Bostan whence a short side-road leads to the grottoes and sculptures. These, together with four decapitated

capitals of columns and a damaged statue are all that are left of a once magnificent pleasure retreat of the Sassanian kings, belonging to various periods of their era. The site was obviously chosen for the abundance of pure mountain water issuing immediately from a cleft of the rock, the water being still stored in a great artificial rock basin and utilized by the inhabitants of Kermanshah.

The surviving monuments consist, enumerating them from east to west, of a large grotto in the form of a vaulted recess, a smaller vaulted chamber in the rock to the right and, to the right of this latter, cut on the open rock, a series of four figures in the form of a bas-relief. Of these, the small grotto and the bas-relief adjoining it are the oldest.

The bas-relief, executed in the time of Ardeshir II (379-383 A. D.), represents him receiving his crown from the hands of Shapur the Great. Behind Shapur who, with Ardeshir II, tramples underfoot a vanquished foe, stands a figure whose head is encircled by a halo. This last figure, it is now generally agreed, is an embodiment of the Zoroastrian faith of the Sassanians, representing the principal Zoroastrian divinity, Ahura-Mazda, or the sun god Mithra.

The smaller of the two grottoes is next in age, having been built during the reign of the successor of Ardeshir II. The sculptures represent two kings, larger than life-size, the one, Shapur II, one of the most notable of Sassanian monarchs, and the other, his son, Shapur III (383-388 A. D.). Notwithstanding his long and successful reign, which included the defeat of the Roman Emperor Julian and the restoration of Persia to a position such as it had not occupied since the days of the Achæmenians, this is one of the two monumental remains of Shapur the Great which exist and this was not erected by him but by his son, Shapur III.

The third of the principal monuments at Tak-i-Bostan, and the larger of the two vaulted grottoes, is also last in point of date of all the architectural and sculptured remains and, at the same time, far exceeds the others in artistic elegance. It was executed under the direction of Chosroes Parviz II whose palace at Kasr-i-

Shirin has already been mentioned and who brought the pleasure grounds at Tak-i-Bostan to their ultimate perfection in the closing days of the Sassanian epoch. According to legend the architect was that Farhad, lover of Queen Shirin, who threw himself from the summit upon hearing the false report of Shirin's death, communicated by Chosroes, who is said to have promised the Queen to Farhad upon the completion of the work.

This last grotto contains on the rear interior wall two great sculptured panels separated by a gracefully carved ledge. The lower panel includes an equestrian statue of Chosroes on an heroic scale. The King, in full armor, is mounted on his favorite horse, Shabdiz, meaning "black as the night," and only little less renowned in Persian legend than his master. The upper panel, on a comparable scale, represents Chosroes in the center of a group of three gigantic figures. To his left is a bearded man presenting him with a chaplet bedecked with streamers; to the right is the figure of a woman who offers him a garland of victory. Seven centuries ago Yakut quoted an anonymous authority to the effect that the three figures were Chosroes, Shirin and the High Priest of the Magi, a legend which still survives among the Persians. Modern scholarship, on the other hand, interprets the two figures on either side of the King as Zoroastrian deities: the one to the left as probably Ahura-Mazda, and the female figure to the right as Anahita, goddess of the waters. In the left corner of the grotto is a bas-relief of Fath Ali Shah representing a vain and presumptuous effort on the part of that Kajar monarch to enroll his name on the scroll of Persian fame.

On both of the inner sides of the arched grotto are bas-reliefs depicting hunting scenes from the life of Chosroes which, in the delicacy of their execution and in their verisimilitude, are among the finest specimens extant of Sassanian architectural decoration. One side represents the arrival of the King at a hunt in which stags are driven by elephants into a netted enclosure and, having been killed, are borne off by camels to the strains of an orchestra. A boar hunt, which decorates the opposite side of the grotto, is

equally vivid in its representation of boars being driven before elephants and shot by arrows from the bow of the King who is seated in a boat. Carved outside above the arch of the grotto are two winged figures resembling angels whose portrayal bears strong testimony to the Byzantine influence brought to bear at this period upon Sassanian art.

#### 4. *The Rock Sculptures of Bisitun*

Only twelve miles east of Tak-i-Bostan, immediately alongside the modern highway between Kermanshah and Hamadan, is an even more famous and historically more important monumental record of the pageant of Persia, that of Darius the Great, carved some three hundred feet above the level of the ground on the great Bisitun mountain. It may, in fact, properly be said that of all the written records of the great Empire of the Achæmenians surviving in stone at Pasargadæ, Persepolis, Susa, on Mount Alvand near Hamadan, at Van in Armenia, at Maghan near Kerman, and as far west as Suez in Egypt, none equals in importance that of the inscription of Darius on the rock of Bisitun.

To obtain a sight of the great inscription and the sculpture surmounting it I had to descend from my automobile opposite a Persian tea house at the point of the rock by the road and then clamber over the strewn boulders at the foot of the mountain as far as it was possible conveniently to climb. From a corner of the rock thus gained, a view, although still somewhat indistinct, may be had of the smooth-faced ledges bearing in three languages a record of Darius's rule. Above them is the sculptured figure of the King, holding in his left hand his bow and pronouncing sentence of death upon the ten kings ranged about him. The names of these last have been inscribed above them and have thus afforded a key to the identification of the peoples of the same subject tribes depicted in procession on the stairways at Persepolis. Nine of the kings stand before Darius, while the tenth, Smerdis, who usurped the Persian crown for a brief period upon the death of Cambyses, is trampled under foot by the victorious



and legal heir to the Achæmenian throne. In the rear of the King are some of his officers of state. Over his head is the winged figure of the Zoroastrian divinity, Ahura-Mazda, who presents to him a ring as the symbol of sovereignty. The sculpture alone measures some ten feet in height and twenty feet in width.

Immediately below the sculpture is the old Persian version of the inscription, alongside which is the Elamitic and the Babylonian. Each inscription begins:

I AM DARIUS THE GREAT KING, THE KING OF KINGS,  
THE KING OF NATIONS, THE SON OF HYSTASPES, THE  
ACHÆMENIAN.

In identical and in brief form, the inscriptions, which were cut in the year 516 B. C., thereupon recite the principal events of the early years of the reign of Darius, each paragraph beginning with the proud pronouncement: *THUS SAITH DARIUS THE KING.*

As regards the perpetuation in Persia to modern times of the most ancient practices and customs nothing is more interesting in the body of the inscriptions than the description given of the mutilation of the captive kings, the cutting off of their noses and ears and their disfigurement in other ways before they were put to death. Such horribly cruel practices have been pursued by Persian monarchs since the dawn of Persian history until as late as the days of the Kajars in the last century.

At the foot of the mountain of Bisitun, almost on a level with the road are the faint remains of a Parthian sculpture, now almost obliterated by an inscription having to do with the building of a caravanserai in the last century, typical of the vandalism which has pursued historical monuments in the East. Originally the sculpture, which was accompanied by an inscription in Greek, represented Gotarzes (46-51 A. D.) on horseback triumphing over his rival, Meherdates, a Parthian brought up at the Court of the Roman Emperor Claudius, together with a winged figure in the act of placing a diadem on the head of the triumphant Parthian King. Around the corner of the mountain are likewise inscriptions of Xerxes, Artaxerxes II and Artaxerxes III, which are

interesting less for their historical record than for the recognition by the two last-named of the divinity of the sun god, Mithra, and of the goddess of the waters, Anahita, alongside the principal Zoroastrian god, Ahura-Mazda.

There is no more romantic story in the history of modern archæology than that relative to the long and painful efforts made in the nineteenth century to decipher the cuneiform inscriptions of the Achæmenians and, notably, that of the Bisitun inscription of Darius.

It was only in the latter part of the eighteenth century, it may be recalled, that scientific methods of historical criticism began to find slow but, at length, general acceptance. Previous to that time men's minds had been clouded by the persistent tendency to interpret the past exclusively in terms of religious history. So all prevailing was this tendency that, even as late as the beginning of the nineteenth century, General Gardanne, of the French Mission to Persia, thought the Bisitun sculpture might represent the Twelve Apostles. At about the same time Sir Robert Ker Porter suggested that the sculpture was a representation of the ten captive tribes of Israel.

In the years that succeeded the Achæmenians, the Old Persian language, represented by cuneiform characters, fell into disuse and was replaced by so-called Middle Persian, or the Pahlevi tongue, written in cursive characters. Middle Persian, in turn, following the Arab Conquest of Persia in the seventh century, gave way before the development of what is now known as the modern Persian language. This, although written in Arabic characters, is a member of the great Indo-European family of languages. Moreover, since its crystallization thirteen hundred years ago it has undergone fewer changes than any other of the languages which have their source in Sanskrit, prehistoric language of the Indo-European peoples. In this respect there is a profound contrast between the inability of the modern Englishman to read readily even Chaucer of the fourteenth century, not to speak of Shakespeare, and the ease with which a Persian is able to read, unassisted by exegesis, any of the Persian literature of the

Middle Ages. With the successive transformations undergone, however, before the Arab Conquest, both in the internal structure of the Persian language, and in its means of written expression, there had long been lost all knowledge of the cuneiform script employed by the Achæmenians.

With the development of a scientific spirit in historical inquiry which so distinguished the latter part of the eighteenth century under the inspiration of the *Encyclopedists* in France, efforts began to be made looking to the decipherment of cuneiform script as well as Egyptian hieroglyphs. All the world is acquainted with the discovery of the Rosetta Stone and of the key thus furnished, in the bilingual inscription in Egyptian and in Greek, by which the riddle of the hieroglyphs was finally solved. But the problem presented by the old Persian cuneiform characters was a far more difficult one, unaccompanied as those were by any inscriptions in known tongues, such as Greek, but only by the equally unknown Elamitic and Babylonian languages.

The first successful attempt at the decipherment of the Persian cuneiform was made in 1802 by a German schoolmaster, G. F. Grotefend, whose manuscript account of his discovery was refused publication by the Göttingen Academy and not made known to the world until 1893, when the riddle had been independently solved by a British officer, Major H. C. Rawlinson, on military duty in Persia.

Much the same methods were applied both by Grotefend and by Rawlinson as those employed by the decoder or decipherer of modern secret codes and ciphers. In comparing other Old Persian inscriptions with that at Bisitun, Rawlinson was attracted by the recurrence of a common word or group of characters preceded by groups differing in their composition. Assuming that the recurring group of characters common to these inscriptions represented in their meaning "king," Rawlinson conjectured that the words, which followed and which differed in their order but not always in their character in the several inscriptions, represented proper names referring to kings, the authors of the inscriptions, and to their fathers. By a fortunate coincidence, such as governs like-

wise the search of all modern cryptographers, Rawlinson had for purposes of comparison an inscription of Darius reading, "Darius, the King, son of Hystaspes," and "Xerxes, the king, son of Darius." Enciphered in English by means of a simple substitution cipher, these inscriptions would read (the groups common to the two being underlined) :

EBSJVT UIF LJOH TPO PG IZTUBTQFT  
YFSYFT UIF LJOH TPO PG EBSJVT

Once having assumed EBSJVT to represent Darius and LJOH, King, these clues were sufficient to enable eventually the entire alphabet and word structure of Old Persian to be mastered, although, it need hardly be explained, the problem confronting Rawlinson and the means employed in its solution have been presented here in their simplest form. Likewise, during the World War, the frequent use of certain words, such as regiment, army corps and like groups in German codes and ciphers, and the inescapable association with those words of other frequently recurring words or phrases, enabled the Allied code and cipher experts to break the most complicated German secret messages intercepted by the Allied wireless.

##### 5. *From Bisitun to Hamadan*

Mrs. Bishop, in her delightful *Journeys in Persia and Kurdistan*, has left a vivid account of her entry upon the Persian plateau and of her passage through Kermanshah and Kangavar to Kum and Teheran by mule caravan in the dead of winter when she was close to being frozen to death. I made the same journey by car in the appalling cold and snow of winter, and once again in the extreme heat of July. The most scorching heat is preferable to the perils of traveling in winter in north Persia. The most favorable traveling conditions are found in the late spring or early autumn.

On my first journey from Baghdad late in January, snow was not encountered until the Paytak Pass was reached, but thereafter snow, varying in depth along the road from six inches to



six feet, accompanied us to Teheran. Herculean efforts are made by the Persian authorities to keep the principal routes open in winter. From December until the disappearance of the snow in late February or March thousands of peasants are mobilized at short intervals along the highways to remove the snow by hand shovels sufficiently to enable motorcars to pass. But, notwithstanding all these efforts, the road even between Baghdad and Teheran is frequently blocked in winter by blizzards from one or two days to a week.

In 1934 I had no difficulty in reaching Kermanshah without either chauffeur or guide in late January, despite having been caught for a time in a snowdrift when foolishly turning out of the road to pass a caravan instead of stopping and allowing the caravan to pass the car. During the night following our arrival in Kermanshah heavy snow fell and a start for Hamadan was made under a dark and forbidding sky. There was something terribly unreal in the vast expanses of snow which met the eye, completely enveloping mud huts and fields and mountains and imparting to objects of prominence a disproportionate size. So great was the snow that Tak-i-Bostan and the rock sculptures and inscriptions of Bisitun were passed unperceived. The village of Sahneh, fourteen miles beyond Bisitun, loomed up ghostlike in its white shroud like some spectral settlement of man.

Scarcely had we left Sahneh before we were overtaken by a blinding snowstorm which so quickly obscured the route that, for some time, it was necessary to proceed at a snail's pace behind a boy who had been engaged at Kermanshah and who now ran before the car to indicate the road's course. Proceeding thus, in fear that any moment would see us precipitated into a ditch, we at length had the good fortune to reach Sarab, a collection of mud huts and tea houses, eight miles from Sahneh. Here a halt was made for some two hours with a number of trucks which had assembled there until the blizzard moderated.

When it had stopped snowing, I followed one of the trucks on its slow climb of the gradually elevated plateau in the direction of Kangavar, twenty miles beyond Sarab; and, after a brief rest

and a cup of tea there, on toward Hamadan. A few miles on, the truck skidded badly on a steep gradient and was stopped by the driver only a few inches from the edge of a deep ravine. My wife screamed hysterically in German. The chauffeur of the truck, an uncommonly plucky fellow, as most Persian chauffeurs must be who expose their lives to the great perils of driving over these mountains in winter, instead of being moved to emotion by his narrow escape from death, ran up to expostulate with us for not sooner disclosing the fact that my wife spoke a language which he knew.

There followed another effort on his part to make the grade, another bad skid, this time directly toward me and almost crashing into my car. It was time for me to undertake a little maneuvering on my own. But the snow was too deep and the road too narrow to permit my car to be turned on the gradient. I could only move by putting the car in reverse and endeavoring to back down the hill. Instead I skidded into a snowdrift, happily on the inner side of the road. Heavy snow had now begun to fall as the twilight deepened, and a truck arriving from the direction of Hamadan warned us that it was impossible to proceed farther. Accordingly, after much difficulty and with no little reluctance, we succeeded in turning about and making our way back to Kangavar.

Kangavar is far from being an ideal resort in summer or winter. Hotels are unknown but the keeper of the modest garage and tea house at the eastern extremity of the town endeavored to make us comfortable in a small room of the garage containing a stove and two beds. Here in Kangavar we were isolated from the world for five days, two spent in the garage and three in the hospitable home of the local Governor, Farajollah Khan. It was almost impossible to avoid anywhere the piercing cold, however, even though, during our stay with the Governor, we ate, slept and lived in the one heated room which was made available to us. Owing to the absence of forests fuel is scarce on the Persian plateau. The houses are only rarely heated by stoves, warmth being obtained on the part of the occupants by sitting during the

day under coverlets spread over an enclosure containing a charcoal brazier, such a device being known as a *kursi*.

Although Kangavar is the site of one of the most important monuments left by the Parthians I had no stomach for antiquities in the icy atmosphere of January and in the midst of the snow and the general discomfort of our existence. One year and a half later, however, I returned to Kangavar in summer to find it, amid the shade of its willow trees and bubbling streams of water, transformed in character. Such are the extremes of climate in Persia.

Kangavar or Konkobar, as it was known to classical writers, is notable as the site of a once magnificent and extensive temple dedicated to the Mithraic goddess of the waters, Anahita. Built during the Parthian period when a strong Greek influence, inherited from Alexander's conquest, still persisted in Persia, the remains of the temple exhibit a pronounced Greek style.

The modern town of Kangavar, with its bazaars and sun-baked brick houses, has almost entirely obliterated evidence of either the great stone base or the substantial columns which once formed the great temple area. A small section, comprising huge blocks of white marble crowned with a broken column of singularly chaste beauty, now forming part of an improvised modern wall in the bazaar quarter, affords some notion of the original splendor of this great temple.

Following the Arab Conquest the temple, situated as it was on the main caravan road between Baghdad and Ray, became a favorite resort of brigands and was known as the Robber's Castle. Yakut, who visited it in 1220 A. D. before it had suffered the ravages of time and of man, described it as "a platform some twenty cubits above the ground and on it there are vast portals, palaces and pavilions, remarkable for their solidity and beauty." More recently it has been visited and described by such eminent archæologists and travelers as Ker Porter, Texier, Flandin, Coste, Dieulafoy and Jackson.

In Persia from remote times the Mithraic goddess, Anahita, occupied both in Mithraism and in Zoroastrianism a position of

marked importance. Under the later Achæmenian kings, in fact, Anahita, goddess of the streams, and Mithra, god of the sun, came to enjoy a regard hardly less important than that of Ahura-Mazda, embodiment of the wise and good spirit, who was the one supreme deity of Zoroaster. In a country where sun and water play such important rôles in the daily lives of men, as they have from prehistoric times on the great Iranian plateau, it was but natural that Mithra and Anahita, even after the introduction of Zoroastrianism and the emphasis placed upon a single supreme god, should have touched more particularly the sensibilities of men than the abstract, Ahura-Mazda. The great influence exercised by Anahita, comparable with that of Artemis in Greece and Diana in pagan Italy, as the fructifying goddess of the waters, has survived in the omnipresent *dokhtar*, or daughter, whose name has been given by legend to bridges, mountains and fortresses in every part of Persia. She survives, therefore, in her legendary character where Mithra and even Ahura-Mazda have passed the way of all gods.

The owner of the garage in which we had occupied a room for two days at Kangavar proved himself of a singularly droll disposition. When we wished to settle our bill with him on the day before our departure he asked to be reimbursed for four days' lodging, including two days we had spent in the home of the Governor. When I asked through an interpreter for an explanation, it was remarked that the innkeeper was charging me for the days I had been snowbound as he considered that I was under obligation to pay him for four days notwithstanding I had occupied a room of his for only two. In extenuation the interpreter explained: "He has the opportunity to obtain guests only in winter when travelers are compelled to remain here; can you conceive of anyone stopping voluntarily in Kangavar?" As I had no possible rebuttal I paid for the four days.

Persians are so extremely sensitive that they cannot bear to be made the object of humor. As I was leaving on the following day I could not resist chaffing the garage-owner. I remarked that he had made a mistake in my bill in not charging me for five



instead of four days, since my stay had been prolonged another twenty-four hours. He was so chagrined that he immediately offered to restore the small amount which he had charged for the two extra days spent in the home of the Governor, an offer which was declined.

Comparable to this incident, in its revelation of the Persian mind, was the explanation given by the Persian authorities to a diplomat in Teheran when a bill was submitted for customs dues on approximately one-tenth of a shipment of liquors. "It is true," it was said, "that diplomats are not subject to the payment of import duties. We have assumed, however, that one-tenth of this shipment may be stolen en route—surely a reasonable assumption—and we cannot possibly exempt the suppositious thieves from the payment of a duty from which private individuals are not exempt under any Persian regulation."

Between Kangavar and Hamadan, a distance of fifty-three miles, the road surmounts the most precipitous of the three great passes separating Baghdad from the central Iranian plateau. This, the Assadabad Pass, twenty miles beyond Kangavar, rises to an elevation of 8,680 feet, as compared with the elevation of the Paytak Pass of 5,300 feet and of the Aveh Pass between Hamadan and Kazvin of 8,600 feet.

At the western foot of the Assadabad Pass is an inconspicuous village of the same name of a few hundred inhabitants which outwardly possesses nothing of interest to the traveler. Yet in this village there was born in 1858-59 a Persian, Jemal-ed-Din el Afghani, who was destined to exercise a greater influence on the political and social fortunes of Persia, Afghanistan, Turkey and Egypt than probably any man of the nineteenth century. His name is virtually unknown to the Western world, though he was known and admired by those profound English scholars, Wilfred Blunt and Edward Browne; but his memory lives and the influence of his remarkable personality still runs deep in the minds of the Islamic world of the Near East.

It is to the deep stirring of men's minds by the teachings of Jemal-ed-Din, in Cairo, Constantinople, Kabul and in Teheran

that one must look for the original impetus given to the independence movements in those capitals. For close to half a century he was a persistent and persuasive exponent, in the intellectual centers of Islam, of the necessity for a readjustment of the old ways as the only means of withstanding the encroaching political influence of the West.

Born in the Shi'a faith of Islam, he gave himself the appellation "the Afghan," and professed to be of that nationality in order that his Persian Moslem religion might not compromise his influence with the Sunnis of Egypt, Turkey and the great world generally of Islam, in which the Shi'ites occupy numerically so subordinate a position. This remarkable genius, a philosopher, publicist and politician, whose extensive travels made him acquainted with the whole of Europe and the greater part of Asia and Africa, entertained even at one time the idea of visiting America. With Orientalists he was equally at home in St. Petersburg, London, Calcutta and in Paris where he engaged in a polemic with Renan. It is not too much to say that the nationalist movements which began to effervesce a generation ago in the Islamic world, as expressed in the Arabi rebellion of 1881, in the rise of the Wafd or Nationalist Party in Egypt, in the Young Turk Committees of Union and Progress which led to the overthrow of Abdul Hamid in Turkey, and in the Persian Revolution of 1905 and the establishment of a constitutional régime—it is not too much to say that all these had their spiritual sources in Jemal-ed-Din el Afghani. His career deserves to be far better known than it is in the West for a proper appreciation of those convulsive forces which have been at work for half a century in the Near East.

#### 6. *Hamadan, the Ancient Ecbatana*

Of all the present towns and cities of Persia, the history and fortunes of none exceed in color and interest that of Hamadan, ancient capital of the Medes, a favorite resort of Queen Semiramis of the Assyrians, a summer residence of the Elamites, a

principal residence of Cyrus, a city prominently associated with the career of Alexander, and equally notable under the Seleucids, the Parthians and the Sassanians.

The situation itself of Hamadan as an axis of ancient caravan routes early determined its prime importance. Lying in a narrow but fertile valley alongside Mount Alvand whose slopes afford the city a plentiful supply of water, Hamadan commands the great east-west route from central Asia through Kazvin to Baghdad. To the north a route extends through Kurdistan to Lake Reza-yieh, while to the south access is had both to Kūm, itself an important center of communications, and through Luristan to Susa and the Gulf.

The town is first mentioned in an inscription of one of the greatest kings of the rising Assyrian Empire, Tiglath-Pileser I, some eleven hundred years before Christ, under the name of Amadana, or place of meeting of many ways. Semiramis, the great Queen of about 800 B. C., is said to have built a palace there to which she resorted during the hot summers of the Mesopotamian plain, establishing a custom which is still followed by many residents of modern Baghdad. The name of the city has undergone so many changes, being known in Persian inscriptions as Hagmatana, to the Greeks as Ekbatana or Agbatana, in the Bible as Achmetha, and by the Sassanians as Hamatan, that it is only within the last few years that scholars have identified all these with modern Hamadan.

At a very early time, from what remote period it is impossible to state, Hamadan was one of the centers of that part of the Iranian plateau in the northwest inhabited by the Aryan tribe of Medes. With the defeat of Assyria in 612 B. C. under the united attacks of the Medes and the Babylonians, the Medes gained their independence of Assyria. Herodotus, principal source of authority for the early history of Media, attributes the founding of Hamadan to Deioces, first independent King of the Medes, about 700 B. C. The city existed long before Deioces, however, whose rebuilding of it probably gained him the title of founder as bestowed upon him by Herodotus. That historian relates that seven

walls were built by Deioces, each rising successively higher than the other, to enclose his palace. Within the innermost wall was also the royal treasury, while the homes of the inhabitants were outside the walls. The battlements of the outer or first wall were painted white; the second, black; the third, red; the fourth, blue; the fifth, orange; the last two were encrusted with precious metals: the one with silver and the other with gold. The use of this extraordinary fortress as a royal treasury was maintained through the vicissitudes of many centuries. To it was transported the treasure plundered by the Medes in the sack of Nineveh in 612 B. C. Here also was transported the fabulous wealth of Croesus by Cyrus, after he had successively subdued and conquered Media at Pasargadae in 550 B. C. and Lydia in 546 B. C. and extended the Persian Empire to the Mediterranean.

In addition to enclosing the royal treasury, the confines of the great fortress constructed by Deioces at Hamadan contained also a secure dungeon where the most important State prisoners were brought for safeguarding and execution. It was here that Darius the Great put to death Fravarti, leader of a Median rebellion, after he had defeated him in battle at Ray. According to the Bisitun inscription: "Fravarti was seized and brought to me. I cut off his nose and his ears, and cut out his tongue, and put out his eyes. He was kept in chains at my door. . . . Afterwards I caused him to be crucified."

With Persepolis, Susa and Babylon, Hamadan became one of the several capitals of the Achæmenian dynasty (559-331 B. C.). From Susa and Babylon the Achæmenian monarchs made their way at the end of winter to Persepolis for the celebration of No-Ruz, and thence proceeded to Hamadan to escape the intolerable heat to which they were exposed in the summer between the rivers.

During the reign of the Achæmenians a great temple was built at Hamadan in honor of Aena or Anahita, the richness and magnificence of which must have justified all that could be imagined of traditional Oriental splendor. From Polybius, the Greek historian who wrote in the second century B. C., it would appear that



this temple stood beneath the citadel which he noted as "fortified to an astonishing strength." The palace and temple he found it "difficult to describe in detail, or to pass over in complete silence," seeing that: "To those authors whose aim it is to produce astonishment, or who are accustomed to deal in exaggeration or picturesque writing, this city offers the best possible subject; but to those who, like myself, are cautious when approaching descriptions which go beyond ordinary notions, it presents much difficulty and embarrassment." In explanation he noted that the beams and fretwork in the ceilings and columns in the arcade and peristyle were overlaid with plates of silver or gold, while all the tiles in the temple were of silver. Most of these, as he records, were stripped off at the time of the invasion of Alexander the Great (331 B. C.), and the great part of the remainder under the reigns of the Seleucids, Antigonus (325-301 B. C.) and Seleucus Nicator (312-280 B. C.). According to Polybius, however, even as late as the invasion of Antigonus in 210 B. C. the temple had its columns covered with gold, and there still remained a considerable number of silver tiles, a "few gold bricks and a good many silver ones," which represented a quantity sufficient to enable Antiochus to strike coinage of a total value perhaps equivalent to five million dollars. It was no doubt within this same temple and palace area that the Achæmenian state archives were searched in the reign of Darius II, when, as recounted in the Book of Ezra, there was found at Achmetha "in the palace that is in the province of the Medes," the decree issued by Cyrus the Great for the rebuilding of the Jewish temple at Jerusalem.

Alexander the Great twice visited Hamadan, the first time after his entry into Persia from the southwest through Susa and Persepolis. Continuing thence in pursuit of Darius III, last of the Achæmenians, through Ray and Damghan, he proceeded, after finding that Darius had been done to death by his own officers, to the conquest of the territories now included within modern Turkestan, Afghanistan and India. Returning from India through Baluchistan along the Persian Gulf to Persepolis and Pasargadæ, he re-entered Hamadan. There, in his immoderate

grief over the death of his favorite, Hephæstion, he is said by Plutarch to have caused the battlements of the old Median walls enclosing the fortress and the palace and temple area to be demolished.

The Seleucids, as related by Polybius, frequently visited Hamadan. Their successors, the Parthians, while maintaining a capital first at Hecatompylos and afterward at Ctesiphon, did not on that account neglect the city which continued to serve as a summer capital for their kings, as it did also for the Sassanians. It is a curious trick of fate, considering the inferior artistic genius of the Parthians, that the only monument of the striking and resplendent ancient history of Hamadan which remains above ground is a colossal stone lion, now lying in a disfigured condition outside the city, which was once the main ornament of the Gate of the Lion in the Parthian period. Of the seven-walled citadel of the Medes, the temple of Aena or Anahita, and the Median or Achæmenian palace nothing remains visible to the eye.

It was long believed that the unoccupied hill, known as the Musallah, adjacent to the eastern section of the city, was the site around which the seven-walled citadel of the Medes was originally built. In 1928, however, there was discovered beneath a vast tumulus of debris thrown up by the modern city a silver foundation plate in the name of Darius the Great similar to those of gold which have since been discovered at Persepolis. In the same neighborhood there were likewise found a considerable number of the bases of columns differing in size and appearance, one of which bore an inscription of Artaxerxes II. The silver foundation plate may represent a commemoration of the building by Darius of an Achæmenian palace on the ruins of the palace of Deioces, the Mede. Not much more can be said with certainty, however, until the modern city has been subject to more extensive excavation.

Upon the Arab Conquest of Persia Hamadan fell in 645 A. D. With its fall the character which it had enjoyed, as a principal place of residence for close to two thousand years under the Empires of Assyria, Media, Achæmenian Persia, Macedonia, Par-

thia and Sassanian Persia, was subordinated to that of the capital of an Arab province. It was at this or a later period that there was erected the domed mausoleum, now in the center of the city, over the reputed tombs of Esther and her uncle, Mordecai, who became a minister of Xerxes I, according to the Book of Esther. Little credence, if any, is now given to the authenticity of these tombs, although their presence in Hamadan is indicative of the influence enjoyed by the Jews in a city where they have constituted an important section of the population from as early as the time of the captivity to the present day.

Although Hamadan suffered a political decline during the period of the Caliphate it nevertheless maintained an important cultural tradition throughout the Middle Ages. Here resided in his latter days Abdullah ibn Sina, a native of Bokhara, and better known to the West as Avicenna (979-1037 A. D.), the "prince of all the sciences." He is recognized as the greatest of Islamic philosophers and physicians in the golden age of Islam. *The Canon of Medicine* of Avicenna was translated into Latin in the Middle Ages and remained a standard textbook in Europe as late as 1650 when it was still in use at the Universities of Louvain and Montpellier. Through Avicenna, Aristotle was rediscovered by Western learning in the Middle Ages when the world of Islam, chiefly its Persian and Turkish elements, kept burning the light of learning after it had long been dimmed and almost snuffed out in Christendom owing to the obscurantism of the Church. His tomb, consisting of a simple brick building, which was restored by a Kajar princess in 1877, is one of the principal places of pilgrimage in Hamadan. The deep humility of Avicenna in the presence of the mystery of the universe is reflected in one of the best known quatrains of Omar Khayyam, of which Avicenna rather than Omar is commonly believed to be the author, namely :

Up from Earth's centre through the Seventh Gate  
I rose, and on the throne of Saturn sate  
And many a knot unravelled by the Road;  
But not the Master Knot of Human Fate.

In Hamadan there was born also the most eminent astronomer of his age, Nasr-ed-Din Tusi, the keeper of Hulagu Khan's great observatory at Maragha. Of Moslem monuments which have survived the sack of the city in the thirteenth century by Tamerlane, its overrunning by the Turks, and its pillage by Aga Mohammed Khan in the eighteenth century, there remains only the little mosque, in the northwest of the city, of Gumbad-i-Alavian, dating from the eighth century A. D., notable for its elegant stucco work. Of other memorials of the ancient past of this most ancient town of Persia there is nothing:

Nought of all the radiant past,  
Nought of all the varied, vast  
Life that throbbed and thrilled, remains  
With its pleasures and its pains,  
Save a couchant lion lone,  
Mute memorial in stone  
Of three empires overthrown—  
Median, Persian, Parthian—  
Round the walls of Hamadan.

#### 7. *Kazvin, Sometime Sefavid Capital of Persia*

From Hamadan to Kazvin, a distance just short of one hundred and fifty miles, the road, passing along an elevated plateau, is unnoteworthy for other than the Aveh Pass, less precipitous than either the Paytak or Assadabad Passes. Long stretches of relatively straight road between bare mountain ranges, typical of the scenery of Persia, are followed by a winding road which traverses the last range intervening before it descends into the spacious valley formed on the north by the giant range of the Elburz and on the south by the Aveh. Far in the distance across the valley nestling under the Elburz is Kazvin.

For all its present shabby appearance Kazvin, actually, is one of the most interesting towns of Persia for those with some sense of the past and possessing the gift of imagination. Within its confines have been enacted scenes from practically all the late



periods of Persian history, while it still contains edifices representative of Arab, Mongol and Sefavid times.

From an early time Kazvin has been an important caravan center. It commands the great road to the east along the Elburz to Meshed and thence to Turkestan, Afghanistan and India; the pass north through the Elburz to Resht and the southern shores of the Caspian; the northeast road to Tabriz, Turkey and the Caucasus; the road west to Baghdad; and the great caravan road which once led from Kazvin through Saveh to Kum and thence separated in three divisions to the southeast, the south and the southwest toward the Persian Gulf. It is of no little interest to observe that, of these ancient caravan roads, all have been followed in the construction of modern motor highways with the one exception of the caravan road from Kazvin to Kum, the displacement of this last being due to the development of Teheran as the capital and the diversion of traffic to that city.

Nothing is known of Kazvin before Shapur I, by whom it was named Shad Shapur. Around this old settlement, a new city known as Madinat Musa was built by the Abbasid Caliph Musa al-Hadi (785-786 A. D.). Under the Caliphate a fortress was erected, and the security of the town was further strengthened by Haroun-al-Raschid who began the construction of a city wall. His work was completed by the vizier of the Seljuk Sultan Alp Arslan. The walls and the fortress and most other memorials of the city's past perished under the destructive and pillaging hands of the Mongols at the beginning of the thirteenth century. A great revival was enjoyed upon the transfer in 1516 of the capital from Tabriz to Kazvin by the first of the Sefavid monarchs, Shah Ismail. Here the capital remained until 1598 when Shah Abbas the Great chose to shift it to a still more central situation at Ispahan.

Of the Sassanian and earlier periods, nothing in Kazvin has survived the Mongol cataclysm. Of the Caliphate, the Seljuk and the Sefavid periods there are, however, interesting remains. Of these the oldest are the Medrassah or College of Haidariya and the Mesjid-i-Jameh Mosque. The former, attributed to the end

of the Seljuk or the beginning of the Mongol period, is fast crumbling into decay, but sufficient of its beautiful Kufic inscriptions and stucco work remains to give some notion of the supreme artistry of its original architect.

The great Mesjid-i-Jameh Mosque, of a composite architecture of many successive periods, is even older than the Medrasseh Haidariya. In its extensive and harmonious proportions it is, indeed, one of the most interesting mosques in Persia. Long known as the Mesjid-e Shah, the mosque was erected on the foundations of a pre-Islamic structure, perhaps a Zoroastrian temple. The sanctuary is Seljukian, while the great entry from the north side is of Mongol construction ornamented with faïence of both the Sefavid and the Kajar epochs. In the southeast angle is a small Abbasid chapel which may have been the work of Haroun-al-Raschid. The porch which stands before the sanctuary was constructed by Shah Abbas II, while the eastern gate, leading to the Ali Kapu, was built in the reign of Shah Suleiman. The great cupola, with a diameter of more than seventy feet, was restored and refurbished with colored faïence in the reign of Nasr-ed-Din Shah; the mihrab dates from the reign of Fath Ali Shah.

Near by is the large and ornate Imamzadeh Hussein, the tomb of a son of the eighth Imam Ali al-Reza. Built early in the sixteenth century by Shah Ismail and reconstructed in the reign of Nasr-ed-Din Shah in the last century, the *imamsadeh* is one of the most extensive and richly decorated structures of its kind in Persia. The entrance is flanked by two minarets framing a gate of colored tiles which gives access into a large paved courtyard. In the center of the courtyard surrounded by arched galleries, stands a domed structure enclosing the tomb. The most striking ornament of this inner shrine are faceted panels of glass set in artistic shapes which cover the walls of the galleried entrance, a decoration of which the Persians are particularly fond and in which they so greatly excel.

In a garden in the center of the town is the governorate occupying an attractive building known as the Chehel Situn, built

in the last century. Of buildings belonging to the Sefavid capital much less remains than in Ispahan. There is only the façade of the Ali Kapu leading into a garden which was once the palace precincts, now occupied by the police, and the stately and superb avenue of old plane or chenar trees, best appreciated in their full foliage of the summer, lining the avenue which fronts the Ali Kapu. But a leisurely walk through the narrow streets of the old town may be rewarded by glimpses here and there of exquisite bits of latticed windows or the cornices of old Sefavid buildings built in and made integral parts of modern sun-dried brick dwellings.

At about the time that the Medrassah Haidariya and the Mesjid-i-Jameh Mosque were in their prime, or when art and literature were flourishing in Persia in a great rebirth of the human spirit following the Mongol ravages, there was born about 1300 A. D. in Kazvin, Ubayd-i-Zakani, probably the greatest satirical writer ever produced under Islam. One of the best stories by this remarkable Persian, uniting the qualities of a Swift and a Rabelais, is that of a man who went to market. He was met by a friend who asked where he was going. He replied, "To the market to buy a donkey." "Say, 'please God,'" the other admonished him. "There is no 'please God' about it," was the reply, "the donkey is in the market and the money is in my sleeve." As he entered the market some pickpockets stole his money. Upon his return home he was met by his former interrogator who inquired whence he came. He replied: "From the market, please God. My money has been stolen, please God. So I did not buy the donkey, please God. And I am returning to my home disappointed and despoiled, please God."

From his famous *Dictionary of Definitions*, the following representative examples of his wit are taken:

*A Wise Man:* He who does not concern himself with the world and its inhabitants.

*A Man of Learning:* He who has not sense enough to earn his own living.

*A Virtuous Woman:* She who is satisfied with only one lover.

*A Maiden:* A name denoting what does not exist.

Alas, this greatest of Persian satirists has found no translator or publisher by whom he might become better known to the Western world; the frankness with which he has expressed his thoughts perhaps constitutes an insuperable bar to his translation.

Kazvin has been visited and described by almost all the old travelers in Persia, including Clavijo, Olearius, Chardin, Tavernier, Thévenot, Le Brun, Bell and Herbert. None of these records, however, can compare in interest with the accounts left of the city and of the Sefavid Court by Sir Anthony Sherley and the fellow members of his remarkable mission who reached Kazvin in 1598 and were accorded a reception such as had not hitherto been given any European travelers in Persia. Some notion of the profound impression this visit made upon the England of the seventeenth century may be had by reference to the English literature of the time—a time when men's minds were fermenting to an extraordinary degree under the spirit of inquiry and discovery. Shakespeare in *Twelfth Night*, written in 1601-02, makes reference to the "pension of thousands to be paid from the Sophy," the name by which the Sefavid monarchs were known to Europe. Milton in *Paradise Lost* mentions Kazvin (Casbeen). Dryden's play, *The Sophy*, was evidently inspired by the reports early circulated in England of the adventures of the Sherley brothers. Certainly, no association of England with Persia from Geoffrey de Langley's mission to Ghazan in 1290 to the present day has excited greater interest or more quickened men's minds than the colorful and romantic circumstances attending the visit of Sir Anthony and Sir Robert Sherley.

These two British soldiers of fortune were characteristic in their careers of the times of Raleigh and Drake and Captain John Smith. Under the encouragement of the Earl of Essex and with the twofold purpose of persuading Shah Abbas to unite with the Christian powers against the Turks and of cultivating closer



commercial relations between England and Persia, they made their way to Kazvin, accompanied by a considerable retinue. Although Ispahan had been inaugurated as the new capital of Persia only a few months previous, in March, 1598, Kazvin had not on that account lost its importance as one of the favorite cities of the Sefavids.

The Sherleys could not have chosen a more propitious conjuncture of circumstances by which to time their arrival. Having completely vanquished the turbulent Uzbeks on the northeastern frontier of Persia in Khorasan, Shah Abbas the Great was about to make a triumphal entry into Kazvin as the Sherleys reached the city from Baghdad. His own frontiers secured, the Shah was now fully ready and eager to direct his efforts to the recovery of territory lost to the Turks before his ascent of the throne; hence the extraordinarily cordial reception given to his unexpected Christian visitors who proffered him aid in the attainment of this aim.

Welcomed by the Shah as a brother, Sir Anthony Sherley, his brother, Sir Robert, and the principal members of their suites, were given seats of honor in the banqueting and feasting engaged in for ten days incident to the Shah's victories. An idea of the fanatical hatred cherished by the Shi'a Persians for the Sunni Turks is gained from a remark made at the time by the Shah that he did esteem "more of the sole of a Christian's shoe than . . . of the best Turk in Turkey." Of the presents made them in Kazvin there were included twenty-four carpets, of which four were silk and gold and six of "clean silk," and fourteen horses and saddles, two of gold plate set with turquoises and rubies, two of plain gold plate, and the other ten of velvet embroidered with silver, together with as much silver as six men could carry.

In their turn the Sherleys made available to the Shah a gun-founder through whom artillery was introduced for the first time in the Persian Army, while instructions were furnished by them in the art of fortifications, so that it was commonly said in England that the "Persian hath learned Sherleian arts of war."

Having accompanied the Shah to Ispahan, Sir Anthony was commissioned, jointly with a Persian, Ambassador of Shah Abbas to the Pope and the principal Christian Kings of Europe. Of this embassy a most entertaining account has been preserved by one of the Persian Secretaries who embraced Christianity and settled in Spain where he left his memoirs, recently translated and published under the name he adopted of Don Juan of Persia.

Inevitable friction on their journey abroad developed between the Persian Ambassador and Sir Anthony Sherley, who appears to have been typical of the contemporary swashbuckling and not always scrupulous Elizabethan adventurer. In Rome the latter was accused of having sold for his own private gain the rich presents sent by the Shah to the Pope. Mr. G. Le Strange, the editor of Don Juan's work, remarks that "there clearly had been fraud on Sir Anthony's part." Don Juan has furnished a pertinent explanation of Sir Anthony's conduct who, as a "man of great parts," was "much given to ostentation, in spite of the fact that fortune had not dowered him with wealth." Sir Anthony, it was added, "had always had a mind to get the better of us," having been assisted in this by the order of Shah Abbas that "we (Persians) should always attend to what Sir Anthony advised, he being more experienced with foreigners in business matters than we." Quitting Rome under mysterious circumstances, Sir Anthony was imprisoned for a time in Venice. His fortunes were rehabilitated by his appointment as the Emperor Rudolph's Ambassador to Morocco. Later he became Admiral of the Spanish Fleet in Naples, but he finally died in poverty and obscurity in Spain.

His brother, Sir Robert Sherley, who had remained behind in Persia and had married a Circassian wife, was appointed Master General of the Persian Army and served on two occasions as the Shah's Ambassador to Europe. After the latter of these embassies he returned in 1627 to Persia in the company of Sir Dodmore Cotton, who had been appointed the year previous by Charles I Ambassador to Shah Abbas. By the time of their arrival in Persia, however, the Shah, who had grown old and

querulous, appears to have become skeptical of the aid so repeatedly promised him by Christendom against the Turks but never forthcoming. Received by the Shah at his palace at Ashraf near the Caspian Sea, both Sherley and Cotton were put off with various excuses and told finally to proceed to Kazvin and to await there a further audience. Herbert, who has left an account of their transactions, opined that the Shah had ceased to have any interest in Sir Robert Sherley "when probably by reason of his old age he was disabled to do him further service." This indifference, due more probably to Abbas's own declining years and the influence gained over him by his ministers, extended likewise and for the same reasons to Sir Dodmore Cotton's mission, of which young Herbert was the secretary and historian.

In grief and utter despair Sir Robert Sherley, on July 13, 1628, "gave this transitory world an ultimum vale" and was buried in Kazvin "under the threshold of his door," thirty years after his proud entry into that city. Sir Dodmore Cotton followed Sir Robert to the grave only a few days later and was buried, according to Herbert, "amongst the Armenian graves." Thus tragically ended the third of England's contacts with Persia before the establishment of permanent diplomatic relations in the beginning of the last century. The Sherley episode awakened such great interest in England that Persian Court costumes were adopted for a time by Charles II. The intellectual world of London devoted itself to the reading of the many travel accounts of Persia which began to be published from that time on in increasingly frequent numbers. Persia may be said to have been discovered by England and France and Germany in the seventeenth century. Since the translation and publication of *The Arabian Nights* in the succeeding century, reviving interest in the Middle East, the fascination which Persia had first aroused in the West in the seventeenth century has never diminished. Today that interest runs as strong if not stronger than ever.

*8. The Sefavids, their Cruelty and its Causes*

The great Sefavid dynasty, which reached its apogee in Abbas the Great only survived that monarch a century. Of Abbas's grandson and successor, Shah Sefi, Krusinski wrote that "'tis certain there has not been in Persia a more cruel and bloody reign than his." After the death of Shah Abbas the Great only the reign of Abbas II intervened to relieve for a time the bloody and debased course of Persian history under Shah Suleiman and Shah Hussein. This last of the effectively reigning Sefavids perished owing to his indifference to any other interests than the harem and to so great a relaxation of power that he fell into the pitfall from which there is no escape in Asia, namely an excessive clemency.

Malcolm, in his inimitable *Sketches of Persia*, has observed that "in countries like Persia all government is personal" and that, as institutions and establishments rise and fall with the caprice of a sovereign, so they prosper and die with their founder. Nothing is truer than this dictum, though it needs to be added that an inevitable residuum of the works of kings, proportionate to their constructive genius, remains after them, in Persia as elsewhere in the East. But from Cyrus to the present day under Reza Shah Pahlevi, Persia has always come to acknowledge sooner or later, whatever the immediate disorders, the rule of a strong hand, if not exercised by the Shah then by his grand vizier. When that grip has been relaxed, as under Shah Hussein, last of the Sefavids, a strong man has appeared from even the most obscure depths, as Nadir Shah, or again, as the present Shah Reza Pahlevi in the midst of the impotence of the Kajars under Ahmed Shah (1909-1925).

Quintus Curtius has written that when Alexander approached Persepolis his eyes were shocked by a spectacle having few parallels in history. It was a procession of some four thousand Greek captives whom the Persians had mutilated by the cutting off, of some, their hands; of others, their feet or noses or ears. Equally cruel was Darius and so almost all the Persian kings of history.



It is important to observe that the cruelties which have stained Western no less than Eastern annals have not necessarily been the product of impotent rage. Thus, the cruelties practiced in the reign of Shah Abbas the Great would appear to have been directed principally to the suppression of theft and to the maintenance of that security of the highways which Persia's economic interests as the principal means of transit for trade between the East and the West made so essential. Krusinski and other spectators of Persian events have testified that people could travel in Persia in the seventeenth century with as much safety as at noon-day in the most civilized town of Europe. Guards were kept posted on all the roads at regular intervals. If a traveler suffered any robbery the Governor of the district in which the robbery occurred was obliged to make good the traveler's loss, while the thieves were tracked down and put to death by torture. Thévenot states that to extort a confession of robbery and other crimes "for the women they put a rat into their drawers." Tavernier recounts an instance of lighted candles being set into a man's flesh and of his being made to run until he was burned alive, a method noted by Hanway as having been employed in the next or eighteenth century at Asterabad, and by Lady Sheil as having been applied in Teheran as late as 1850.

Like the Caliph Haroun-al-Raschid, Shah Abbas the Great frequently disguised himself as a simple citizen to mingle unobserved among his subjects the better to acquaint himself with public opinion and the conditions of the people. Tavernier relates that going into the bazaars on one such occasion, as was his custom, to test the weights and measures and having found a baker guilty of short measure, and a butcher of short weight, he ordered the construction on the *meidan* of a large spit and oven. Having commanded that the two offenders should be arrested, they were paraded through the town, accompanied by public criers to make known their guilt, and they were then, respectively, baked and roasted alive.

The greatest blot on Shah Abbas the Great was his ordering the assassination of his eldest son and causing the blinding of his two

younger sons in fear of their possible usurpation of the throne. The sequel was as cruel and as tragic as the occurrence. The General of the Army having refused to be a party to the death of the heir to the throne, the Shah prevailed upon another of his courtiers, one Bebut, to perform the task. Later Abbas bitterly repented of his act and, in his inconsolable grief, commanded Bebut to go and cut off his own son's head. In Olearius we read that :

He was forc'd to obey and Schach Abbas seeing him going into the Room with his Son's head, ask'd him how he did it. Bebut made answer, Alas my Liege, I think I need not tell you; I have been forc'd with my own hands to kill my only Son, whom I lov'd above anything in the World. . . . The King reply'd, Go thy wayes, Bebut, and consider how great must have been my affliction when thou broughtest me the news of my son's death, whom I had commanded thee to put to death. But comfort thyself, my Son and thine are no more, and reflect, that thou art in this equal to the King thy Master.

As if to atone for his father's end in blood, the son of this murdered prince, Shah Sefi, who succeeded his grandfather, Abbas the Great, exceeded all other members of the Sefavid family in his wanton cruelty. On one occasion, having ordered the eyes of a minister to be gouged out, and seeing another flinch at the sight, Shah Sefi exclaimed in his rage, "Can't you see justice done to the wicked?" and immediately ordered the cutting out of the eyes of his minister who had been guilty of the weakness of giving expression to humane feeling.

In Asia might has always made right, and only by the arousing of fear is there obtained the precarious title to rule. So it has been since the days of Cyrus and Darius, whose mutilations of the captive kinds are proudly recounted by the latter in the Bisitun inscriptions. And so it will continue as long as a slave mind exists.

If the instilling of fear ceased only recently to be accompanied in Persia by mutilation and torture, it may be well to recall that

no later than four hundred years ago Sir Thomas More was condemned by the Lord Chancellor of England to have his hands and legs chopped off, his belly cut open and his intestines burned. How little removed we are still in the West from the blind fear of primitive minds may be seen in the treatment meted out to negroes in the United States and to socialists in central Europe.

While, therefore, mutilations and inhuman tortures have not been practiced in Persia since the beginning of this century, which may be taken as an advance by Persia over that area of the world known under the satiric name of "Western civilization," the present Shah cannot be oblivious of Oriental psychology, ingrained during centuries of despotism and oppression. Nor is it possible that he can be unmindful of the fate of Shah Hussein and of that "boundless clemency" which contributed to the downfall of that last of the Sefavids, any more than he can be of the more recent example of the supine Shah Ahmed, last of the Kajars.

Teymourkache, Minister of the Court and the most dominant and powerful personality in Persia, found himself suddenly imprisoned in 1933, and after some months of imprisonment, announcement was made of his death. Sardar Assad, Minister for War, followed next in 1934. In the late autumn of that year many of the Bakhtiari chiefs who had languished in prison with their fellow tribesman, the Minister for War, were executed. In 1935 the President of Parliament, Dadgar, availed himself with alacrity of the opportunity to abandon his duties and to proceed hastily abroad in exile.

Rawlinson, the great historian of the Parthian and Sassanian dynasties in Persian history, has remarked in an eloquent passage on the cruelties of the Parthian kings, which might be taken as an appropriate text for the history of Asia:

'The shedding of blood is like "the letting out of water."  
When once it begins, none can say where it will stop. The absolute monarch who, for his own fancied security, commences a system of executions, is led on step by step.

Historians of Nadir Shah, the Napoleon of Asia, have one and all attributed the downfall of that ruler by assassination not only to excessive avarice but above all to an unbounded cruelty. A cruelty which comes to be practiced as a means of inculcating fear is extended in the end out of a fear on the part of the ruler of those ruled. Fear begets fear. The vicious circle is complete.

Perhaps Shah Pahlevi is better acquainted with the motive forces actuating his people than the foreign witnesses of modern Persian history. By methods of repression fear is bred. Fear has perhaps been the greatest single force in the relations of the governor and the governed in Persia and in Asiatic history since the beginning of time. Whatever the Shah's conceptions he guards well his own counsel. There is no more characteristic story of him than his reply to an obsequious official who ventured to compare his career with that of Nadir Shah, of a somewhat similar origin, who reorganized the shattered Persian Army, made himself Shah, and restored Persia to a dominant position in the affairs of the Middle East. Reza Shah Pahlevi's comment was: "Nadir Shah was overthrown for not being able to keep his own counsel; I am wise enough to keep mine."

In the East, where nothing material is stable and the works of man have nothing durable or lasting, humanity in the mass, from the days of Cyrus to those of Pahlevi, would appear to have undergone but little change. If nothing is lasting or remains, the mind and heart of the human being remain eternally the same. Here everything perishes except the character of man. The static nature of the individual's economic situation when, from primitive times to the present, men have been the slaves of their governors, may have contributed to the fixed molding of his nature. Today, in the industrialization of Persia and the Middle East the matrix of that mold is being radically transformed. Perhaps, who knows, it may be accompanied in the years that lie ahead by a like radical transformation of the mold.



## CHAPTER X

### TEHERAN AND THE CASPIAN PROVINCES

#### *1. The Capital City of Persia*

TEHERAN, lying at an elevation of some thirty-eight hundred feet above sea-level on the southern foothills of the Elburz Mountains, presents, notwithstanding its character as the latest in a long series of capital cities of Persia, singularly little of interest either in its general aspect or in the individual style of its public buildings. Its population, however, estimated at three hundred thousand, entitles it to rank as the most populous center of the country.

Approached from the west along the main highway leading from Kazvin, the city is seen to extend in straggling outline over gently inclining foothills of the lofty mountain range which rises some six to eight thousand feet above the plain, culminating in the crest of Mount Demavend in the far distance some nineteen thousand or more feet in height. A profusion of trees in the environs and within the town itself is one of the chief distinguishing characteristics of the city from a distance, its general outline and situation being defined and distinguished less by the noble works of man than by the natural gifts of nature. The lofty summit of Tochal, twelve thousand six hundred feet high, capped wellnigh the year round with snow, surmounting the Elburz Mountains which take their rise almost from the limits of the city, offers a landmark more distinguished and more eternally appealing than even the glittering minarets or flashing domes which dominate the landscapes of Ispahan, Shiraz, Yezd or Kerman.

In 1874 Nasr-ed-Din Shah, returning from Europe where he had been greatly impressed with the walls and the ramparts of Paris, caused a wall and moat to be constructed about the city of

Teheran resembling the enceinte of the French capital. Twelve gates were erected supporting double towers in the form of minarets, the whole covered with the gaily colored tiles which have been so long used as architectural decorations in Persia. Until 1934 these gates, however inferior they may have been artistically, contrived to give to the traveler entering Teheran that indispensable suggestion of Eastern color and magnificence commonly associated in Western minds with the lands of Haroun-al-Raschid and with the settings of the scenes from the *Arabian Nights*. Many have decried these gates; indeed O'Donovan, the intrepid traveler, on his way to the Merv oasis in the last century, is almost alone in expressing approval of them. But then O'Donovan possessed an unfailing eye for color and for the picturesque in the East, and I prefer to align myself with him.

Unfortunately but with that characteristic disdain and disregard manifested throughout history by new rulers in Persia for the works of their predecessors, the first Shah of the Pahlevi dynasty commanded in 1933 the razing of the principal gates, including that on the Kazvin road. Accordingly, only four now remain and these the most insignificant, with the result that the traveler now enters Teheran through winding muddy or dust-laden streets, leading along the dingy homes of the dwellers in the suburbs, or a succession of small shops, with signs in Russian or Armenian characters, suggesting so unmistakably the close proximity of the colossus of the north.

It is not until the center of the town is reached that broad paved boulevards are encountered, lined by more substantial buildings than those on the periphery of the city's precincts. These boulevards, which are tending to transform the character of Teheran from that of a provincial into a modern city, date only from the last year or two. With their expansion to outlying districts they may in time give it something more of the air of a capital than it has heretofore possessed. It is well to remember, however, that Teheran's importance is a development only of the last century since its selection as the capital of Persia by Aga Mohammed Shah, founder of the Kajar dynasty.

Ray, an important city of the Medes and the capital for a time of the Seljuks, lies to the southeast of Teheran within sight of the present capital; indeed, the site of that ancient city in such close proximity to Teheran is almost the sole claim of Teheran to any special historic interest.

Teheran is first mentioned in the twelfth century by the Arab geographer, Yakut, who describes the inhabitants as troglodytes, living underground in a semi-savage state. Today this tradition continues to be preserved in the retreat of the more civilized inhabitants to the cellars which form an indispensable part of almost every house, as an escape from the intolerable heat of the summer. Of the early European travelers the most notable descriptions of Teheran have been left by Clavijs, the Spanish Ambassador to Tamerlane, in 1404, by Pietro della Valle in 1618, and by Sir Thomas Herbert in 1627, when accompanying Sir Dodmore Cotton, British Ambassador to the Court of Shah Abbas.

Sir Thomas Herbert has left an entertaining account of the lack of courtesy shown the British Ambassador by the local Governor which has been interpreted as suggestive of a Persian distrust of diplomats something more than modern in its development. According to Herbert, the Governor of Teheran proved a man "of little worth in our apprehension; for, albeit he had been Ambassador from Shaw-Abbas to Rudolph II, the German Emperor, which no doubt instructed him in some punctilios of good breeding and expressing of civilities to strangers," it happened that "albeit our Ambassador in civility sent to visit him, he returned a slight thanks without a re-visit; which we thought barbarous." And elsewhere the genial-souled Herbert had occasion to remark in one of his more wistful moments his conviction that he may well call himself a miserable man whose welfare depended upon the smiles of Persia.

Whether the failure of the Persian Governor of Teheran to return the British Ambassador's visit may or may not be interpreted as indicative of a permanent disposition of Persians toward foreign diplomats, the difference in the character of Sir Dodmore's embassy from that of modern diplomatic missions is illus-

trative of a decisive change which has taken place in international relationships.

Until modern times diplomatic embassies possessed a temporary rather than a permanent character, being dispatched by one sovereign to another only on occasions demanded by special circumstances. Thus Sir Dodmore Cotton, after his particular mission had terminated, was not succeeded by another British representative until nearly two centuries had elapsed when, with the advent of Napoleon and in consequence of the ambitious designs formed by him against India, it became imperative for Great Britain to send a mission to Persia to endeavor to counteract the growing French influence at the Court of the Shah. Sir Harford Jones's arrival in Teheran in 1808, coincident with the presence of Sir John Malcolm, representing the government of India, marked, accordingly, only the second British mission to Persia in two hundred years. It was not long afterward, however, that a permanent British Mission was established in Teheran which has been maintained ever since.

Diplomatic relations between the United States and Persia were established considerably later, in 1883, with the appointment in that year of S. G. W. Benjamin, of New York, as Minister Resident and Consul General. The American Legation is housed in a building owned by the government enclosed in one of the most beautiful of Teheran gardens on the north side of the city. A little east of the Legation on the Avenue Yussef Abad are the extensive grounds of the American College, the name of which has recently been changed to Alborz College. Names of other foreign educational institutions have been similarly changed, in deference to the nationalistic Persian desire that they should all bear Persian names.

The College, whose student body numbered three hundred and sixty in 1935, has been developed through the activities of the American Presbyterian Church which began work as early as 1834 among the Nestorians in Urumiah (Rezayieh). Extended subsequently to other centers of northern Persia, the work of the mission has included the organization at its various stations of



religious, medical and educational faculties. In Teheran the college, which granted its first B.A. degree in 1928, has come to be distinguished for the increasingly important part taken by its alumni in the political, social and economic life of the country.

In 1935 there was laid, with appropriate ceremony, the foundation stone of the new Teheran University, which is being built northeast of the American College and is the first institution of higher learning organized by the Persians. The buildings will in time add appreciably to the dignity of the environs, while the project's inception is in itself an earnest of the intellectual awakening of Persia and the East. Those archæologists who may in future centuries turn up the foundation plates of the university may find, in its establishment by the first of the Pahlevi dynasty, Reza Shah Pahlevi, some measure of the progress made in Persia since the days of Darius whose gold foundation plates at Persepolis recorded palaces and pageants that served the interests of the country's masters rather than its masses.

Of palaces Teheran possesses, or did possess, a number out of all proportion either to the size of the city or to any real or imaginary need of the Kajar monarchs by whom they were constructed. Persian dynasties from earliest times, however, have shown a consistent repugnance to the occupancy of the abodes of their predecessors, and the present Shah has proved no exception. He has preserved for his use only the Gulistan Palace from among the innumerable royal seats of the Kajars in Teheran and its vicinity. And even Gulistan has ceased to be occupied by the Shah and is used only on state occasions, such as the reception of foreign ambassadors and ministers and the holding of the Royal Salaams at No-Ruz and on the Shah's birthday. A new palace has been constructed on the Avenue Pahlevi where his Majesty the Shah-in-Shah resides with his two wives. It is enclosed by a great wall affording that complete privacy in the home which is sought by the high and low alike in the East. A special form of privacy not shared by the commonality of his subjects is the prohibition of all street traffic of every kind on the streets surrounding the palace after eight o'clock in the evening. This and a

summer residence at Shimran comprise the number of Pahlevi's homes.

Of the former Kajar palaces described by Curzon, one of the most interesting, Negaristan, built by Fath Ali Shah, was demolished in 1928, a few years after the advent to the throne of the present Shah, to make way for the construction of the new Teachers' College and an Art School. At this school a commendable effort is being made to train specialists in the weaving of rugs, the painting of miniatures, the making of tiles and in all those other arts and crafts for which Persia has been long distinguished. Ironically enough, the construction of the Art School, dedicated to the revival and preservation of Persian art, caused the destruction of one of the most interesting artistic relics of the Kajars.

One of the distinguishing features of that palace was a series of great mural paintings of Fath Ali Shah and his sons surrounded by his ministers receiving in solemn audience representatives of the European Powers. Inclusive of portraits of Sir John Malcolm, Sir Harford Jones, Sir Gore Ouseley and the French General Gardanne, emissary of Napoleon, in their picturesque costumes of the period, the paintings contained life-size representations of no less than one hundred and eighteen members of the Shah's Court.

Happily, however, there has been conserved a series of somewhat similar if inferiorly executed mural paintings depicting a state visit of Nasr-ed-Din Shah to the palace of his Vizier Nizam ol Molk. In addition to the portrait of the Shah, his sons and principal ministers, the paintings are particularly interesting for their inclusion of Count Gobineau with other members of the diplomatic corps accredited to the Shah's Court. The paintings bear the signature of the artist, the uncle of Persia's most distinguished modern painter, Kamel ol Molk Ghaffary, and the date 1270 (1853). They represent in all some eighty-three life-size figures.

Preservation of so interesting an historic pageant is due to the fortuitous circumstances that the former palace of the Grand

Vizier of Nasr-ed-Din Shah has been transformed into one of the most popular restaurants of Teheran, the Loganteh, and the paintings form the decorations of the main dining room. The restaurant stands on the small square abutting upon the Majlis and opposite the site of the old Negaristan Palace. It is to be hoped that the interesting historic record may be preserved for posterity in the new national museum now in course of construction, when the palace of the former Grand Vizier and Nizam ol Molk will have passed from the scene.

Of the other palaces of the Kajar dynasty, the so-called Castle of the Kajars, north of Teheran on the slopes of the hills leading to Shimran above the modern Kasr-Kajar Prison, is falling into ruins. The lovely Palace of Eshretabad is no more, its site being occupied by barracks; Suleimanieh, now occupied by a former Prime Minister, Vossugh-ed-Dowleh, stands in mournful decaying aspect overlooking the modern golf course; Dowshin Tepeh on an adjacent hill is a crumbling ruin; while the Palaces of Sultanetabad, Akdassieh, and Nejefabad in Shimran are tenantless and given over to the abode of bats and wild pigeons and to the ghosts of the Kajars. Nejefabad, with its still stately rooms, from which the plaster is falling, and its terraces along which fountains once played in a great garden now choked with weeds, evokes, like Pasargadae and Persepolis, an overwhelming sense of the extreme transitoriness of all things, including the lives and fortunes of even the most despotic princes or the proudest monarchs.

One Thing is certain and the Rest is Lies;  
The Flower that once has blown forever dies.

Niaveran in Shimran, it is true, remains and is occasionally used for distinguished foreign guests; and Fahrahabad, near Dowshin Tepeh, has been recently renovated and converted from its abandoned state into an occasional palace for the Shah's favorite Queen. Alone of all the Kajar palaces, however, that of Gulistan is preserved in its state of former splendor, with its great

audience hall containing the famous Peacock Throne, and its subsidiary buildings, including the Shems-el-Imaret with its Hall of Brilliants and the building occupied at present by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, which was once an appendage of the palace.

The Gulistan or Rose Garden Palace, with its pools and fountains and its great trees of pine, cypress, plane and poplar, setting off the palace buildings as emeralds surrounding a diamond, presents an external appearance of that dream-like fanciful unreal beauty only comparable to visions evoked by the *Arabian Nights*. Gobineau, one of the most acute observers of Persian life and character who ever lived, has remarked that the most complete key to an understanding and appreciation of Persia is to be found in those same *Nights*. Three sites today reproduce their imagery in full measure: the Mahun Shrine near Kerman, the *meidan* of Ispahan and the Gulistan Palace.

Much space has been taken by Curzon in his study of Persia to disprove the claim of the great bejeweled throne in the reception room of the Gulistan Palace to the title commonly given it of the Peacock Throne, which figured among the possessions taken from the Great Mogul in 1739 by Nadir Shah in the sack of Delhi. Williams Jackson, no less an authority on Persia, has taken issue with Curzon; hence let us rather adhere to the illusion, if it be such, that the noble throne as it stands deserves the title long assigned it.

Initiated by Aga Mohammed Khan, when establishing his capital at Teheran, the Gulistan Palace was completed by Fath Ali Shah, with additions by Nasr-ed-Din Shah. The northwestern building, now occupied by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, contains, as evidence of its royal character, extensive mural paintings of the Kajars and of their ministers, as well as conventional scenes, including one of Europeans in Elizabethan costumes. This may represent a reflection of the naïve assumption made generally by Persians as late as the time of Sir John Malcolm in the last century that European costumes were as unvarying from one century to another as those of Persia. The building containing these paintings was used successively as the harem quarters of



the palace, as rooms for the transaction of business by the Shah's ministers, and now as the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, divorced from any connection with the Gulistan Palace proper. In one of the unoccupied rooms on the ground floor is to be found a white marble throne, once the possession of Kerim Khan, who ruled Persia from Shiraz as the representative of the Zand dynasty, the immediate predecessor of the Kajars. The throne, which resembles a raised platform, was transferred from Shiraz to Teheran.

The Gulistan Palace accordingly contains the thrones of Nadir Shah and of Kerim Khan whose rule intervened between the Sefavids and the Kajars, as well as one constructed for Fath Ali Shah which stands in the main Gulistan Palace immediately before the Peacock Throne. Although they are preserved as among the few vestiges of those reigns, Shah Reza Pahlevi no longer makes use of any of them as did the Kajars. Nor has there been constructed a Pahlevi throne; for Reza Shah Pahlevi has signalized his rule by being the first of recorded Persian Shahs from the time of Cyrus to abandon the use of regal seats and to receive in solemn audience both his own ministers and the representatives of foreign Powers, standing in the Hall of Brilliants.

The Hall of Brilliants, to which the public is never admitted, is in a portion of the palace known as the Shems-el-Imaret, farthest removed of the palace buildings from the street.

The principal and central edifice of the Palace, the Gulistan proper, is preserved as a museum to house the jeweled swords of Tamerlane, of Shah Ismail, founder of the Sefavid dynasty, and of Mohammed Aga Khan, founder of the Kajar dynasty. Here are also ranged in glass cases alongside the walls of the great reception room a miscellaneous array of presents from crowned heads to the Kajars, consisting largely of porcelain plate. On state occasions the room is used for evening parties given by the government. Guests are entertained with a display of fireworks from the palace grounds which add, if anything can add, to the enchantment of a scene so completely representative of our conception of what Persia and the East should be—but so seldom is.

Curzon has appropriately remarked that "for a great capital Teheran is singularly destitute of those immense religious edifices, whether mosques or *medrassehs*, which tower too often in a state of utter ruin, above the housetops of most Oriental towns." The reason, as he found, is to be explained by the comparatively modern age of Teheran.

This absence of noteworthy mosques and religious colleges which was remarked upon almost a half-century ago is as characteristic of Teheran today as it was then. Since that time, it is true, there has been completed the Sepahsalar Mosque with funds provided by the Commander-in-Chief of Nasr-ed-Din Shah. The tile work of the interior, the imposing minarets and the general symmetry of the architecture, while pleasing to the eye, present nothing in any way comparable to other similar monuments. The edifice consisted originally of both a mosque and a *medrasseh*, or religious college, but is now used solely as a college for the training of mullahs whose rooms range in tiers about the open court. The principal interest of the premises is less the architecture of the structure than the library which contains an exceptional collection of Persian miniatures illustrating old manuscripts.

Adjacent to the Sepahsalar Mosque are the extensive and elegant grounds of the Majlis comprising the buildings of the Persian Parliament. Influenced by the Russian Revolution of 1905, democratic forces were set in motion in Persia and the Middle East which culminated in Persia in the granting of a constitution in 1906, followed by the opening in that year of the first Majlis. A parliament building was constructed which, however, suffered extensively in the bombardment of 1908 when Mohamed Ali Shah, with the support of Russia, undertook to repudiate the constitution which his father had granted Persia and promoted an armed attack on the deputies and the parliament building by Persian forces commanded by Russian officers. Subsequently, the virile Bakhtiaris from the south and the politically enlightened population of the north centering about Tabriz and Resht came to the defense of the constitutional régime. In consequence of their insurgence the Shah was compelled to abdicate and flee into

exile, leaving the throne to his minor son, Sultan Ahmed Shah, the last of the Kajars, who, before many years, had to relinquish the throne in favor of the present Shah.

More recently the parliament buildings have undergone extensive alterations and improvements. Most notable additions are the ancient star of Azhura, emblematic of the Zoroastrian faith, which adorns the interior of the Majlis, and the striking great reception room whose walls and ceilings are covered with faceted glass, gleaming like innumerable diamonds.

Like Ispahan, Teheran possesses its *meidan* but the latter naturally yields to that of Ispahan in point of both historical associations and the intrinsic interest of the edifices which surround it. On the north side of the Teheran Square is the extensive new municipal building, and opposite it the new Ministry of Posts and Telegraphs. On the east corner is the modern handsome structure built in 1933 to house the Imperial Bank of Persia, while on the west side are situated the less distinguished offices of the Imperial police.

## 2. *Environs of Teheran*

In historic interest the comparatively modern city of Teheran is entirely overshadowed by the once important town of Veramin, now a small village thirty-six miles to the southeast, and by the even more ancient Ray whose scarcely traceable ruins fall now almost within the southeastern precincts of modern Teheran.

Of Ray, one of the most populous cities of the ancient world, which vied in importance with Babylon and Nineveh and whose past is written in records as old as the Bible, almost nothing remains in evidence of its historic pageant or of those millions who once peopled it, and of whom it may only be said that they were born, lived and died. The ramparts of a fortress may be traced in outline along the rim of the hills overlooking the ancient site, including a number of ruined towers. Nothing else is left of a city once known as "the first city of the world" except coins and specimens of pottery and other handiwork of its inhabitants dug up from its foundations, or the outlines of some of its former build-

ings recently uncovered by the Expedition of the University of Pennsylvania.

Known variously in history as Rhagha, Rhages, Rei, Rhey and Ray, the city is mentioned in the Books of Tobit and Judith of the Apocrypha. It was an important center of Zoroastrianism, and it was here that Alexander the Great in the fourth century B. C. rested his troops on the eleventh day of their march from Hamadan in pursuit of Darius. It was rebuilt by Seleucus Nicator, one of the successors of Alexander. Arsaces, the founder of the Parthian Empire in 248 B. C., made it his capital, and it came to be known as Arsacia. Record of its association with the Sassanian dynasty was preserved as late as the last century in the form of a rock sculpture, presumably representative of a Sassanian monarch, observed and sketched by Sir William Ouseley in 1811 but subsequently obliterated to make way for a sculpture of Fath Ali Shah.

The city attained its zenith after the Arab conquest in the seventh century A. D. It was here that the renowned Haroun-al-Raschid was born in 763 A. D. With the decline of the Caliphate at Baghdad and of the exercise of its authority over Persia in the ninth century, Ray fell under the sway of the independent dynasties which successively asserted their supremacy, including the Buwayhid (932-1055 A. D.) of Persian origin, the Ghaznavid (962-1186 A. D.) of Turkish origin, and finally, before succumbing to the Mongol invasion, the great Turkish power of the Seljuks. Made their capital with Nishapur by these last, the city was destined to become the last resting place of Togrul Beg, and the residence of Alp Arslan, the Great Lion, two of the most conspicuous of the early Seljuk leaders.

At length, in 1221, a city which had been described as the most flourishing in the East after Baghdad and which had enjoyed prosperity for perhaps more than two thousand years, fell before the troops of Genghis Khan who slew seven hundred thousand of its inhabitants. Tamerlane likewise visited his wrath upon it. Although it became for a brief period the seat of government of his younger son, Shah Rukh, the city never revived and slowly



fell into that state of utter desolation which now distinguishes so many seats of man's former greatness in the East, such as Susa, Babylon, Nineveh and Tyre. The sole monument which rears its head today amid the ruins of Ray is a tower commonly ascribed to Togrul Beg. It has, however, no warrant to such a title, dating as it probably does only from the fourteenth century and having been restored to its present state as late as the last century. Finally, beyond the low hills along which the old fortifications of Ray may be traced, there stands a solitary tower of silence used for many years by the Zoroastrians of Teheran for the disposal of their dead, a reminder that men's faiths may find longer perpetuation than their works.

With the destruction of Ray by the Mongols, Veramin, situated beyond it to the southeast, became the principal city of the region. Evidence of that rich constructive genius which succeeded the destructive proclivities of the Mongols is to be found at Veramin in the form of a number of notable monuments to the Mongol occupation. These include a tomb of Ala-al-Din in the shape of a tower with a conical cap, constructed in 1281; an *imamzadeh* dating from 1307; and, most remarkable of all, a great mosque commenced in the reign of the Mongol Sultan Uljaitu Khodabنده, and completed in 1412 during the reign of Shah Rukh. Although now in a sadly dilapidated state, enough is left of the mosque to indicate the superb skill lavished upon its decoration.

Equally distant from Teheran as Veramin, and a mile or two off the main highway leading from Teheran to Meshed, is the picturesque mountain village of Demavend. It contains a mosque which has been identified as one of the oldest in Persia, of perhaps one thousand years. This mosque and one at Nain are probably the two best preserved of the so-called primitive mosques in Persia. The foundations of two others have been uncovered at Damghan and at Ray. They all resemble, in the simplicity of their outlines and in the absence of Byzantine influence which was later so strongly exerted on Moslem architecture, the finest specimen of the primitive mosque to be found anywhere in the world, namely the Ibn Tulun Mosque in Cairo. In both the mosque at

Demavend and in that of Nain there may be recognized the simple origin of the mosque or place of prayer, as conceived by Mohammed: an open court, with the sides covered as a protection from the intense eastern sun, the shade having been originally obtained by the spreading of palm branches over rude supports which came in time to be replaced by graceful columned arches. Alongside the mosque at Demavend a minaret of sun-dried bricks towers over seventy feet in height. At first glance it has all the appearance of a brick smokestack of a modern factory. One similar in structure and of approximately the same height marks the presence of the mosque at Nain.

Apart from the exceptional interest of its mosque, Demavend, with its covered bazaars and its far-famed fruit trees nourished by the swiftly moving stream which cascades its way from the adjacent mountain slopes through the center of the village, is one of the most picturesque mountain hamlets of many in the vicinity of Teheran. From it is commenced the ascent to the Mount from which it takes its name, but so closely does the village lie enfolded in a cleft of the mountains that the great peak is not visible from it.

For a picnic Demavend is an ideal spot, but for those who may desire places more easily accessible to Teheran there are the charming mountain gorges of Pas-Kaleh and Haft Hawz below Mount Tochal. These are resorted to for the day by Persians and foreigners in Teheran desirous of escaping the intense heat which descends upon the plain from May to September.

Some nine miles north of Teheran, overspreading the foothills of the Elburz Mountains, is a series of villages known under the general name of Shimran and including, among others, Gulhek, Zagandeh, Tajrish and Darbend, the resorts in summer of the more affluent population of Teheran. From Darbend, which may be reached by automobile, donkeys may be obtained for the trail leading up the Pas-Kaleh gorge. From Tajrish the way may be made to Haft Hawz by automobile through the village of Vanak to Evin, where donkeys may be procured for the ascent by trail to the wild lovely Gorge of the Seven Pools.

A longer excursion into the mountains from Teheran is that by automobile to the mountain village of Shemshak, distant some sixty miles on the slopes of the Elburz. Fifteen miles from the city a turn is taken on the Meshed road to the left. Thence the road mounts steadily, passing through the pleasantly situated mountain villages of Leshkarak and Ushan, overlooking the Jajerud River, and then higher to Shemshak. Returning and regaining the Meshed road, one may have a view of the fairly well preserved lodge and park of Sorkh-Hissar built by Nasr-ed-Din Shah, only a mile or more eastward. Like most of the former habitations of the Kajars, the place is slowly falling into decay, untenanted by any but occasional visitors from Teheran. West of Teheran, there is the pleasant village of Karaj, twenty-four miles distant, at the foot of the mountains, where running streams from the mountain slopes and the cheerful shade of groves in the modern Agricultural School offer a pleasant prospect for picnickers or for the way-worn traveler.

### 3. *From Teheran to Mazanderan and Gilan*

Of all the great varieties of the aspects of nature and man presented by the relatively vast extent of Persia, ranging from the palm lands of the south inhabited by peoples of Arab descent, through the desert regions of the southeast, to the mountain fastnesses of the west and south peopled by the nomadic Lurs and Bakhtiari, no part of Persia stands in greater contrast to the rest of the country than the Caspian provinces of Mazanderan and Gilan.

Cut off from the great Persian plateau by the giant range of the Elburz Mountains, which form a part of one continuous mountain barrier in an east and west direction from the Hindu Kush to the Caucasus, these two provinces have long been more accessible to Russia than to Persia in whose territory they lie.

Following upon the systematic extension southward of the Russian Empire in the nineteenth and at the beginning of the twentieth century, it seemed only a question of time before Mazan-

deran and Gilan, together with the provinces of Asterabad and Khorasan on the east of Mazanderan, and of Azerbaijan on the west of Gilan, would be absorbed by the Russian Empire.

Actually, Gilan had been occupied by Russian forces of Peter the Great for a brief period from 1723 to 1736. This was under a treaty concluded by Shah Tahmasp II, son of the deposed Shah Hussein, by which the provinces of Gilan, Mazanderan and Asterabad, as also Baku and Derbent, were ceded to Russia in return for assistance against the Afghans. The forces were withdrawn from the ceded territories in 1736 owing to the desire of Russia to placate the powerful new ruler of Persia, Nadir Shah. At the beginning of the nineteenth century the forward push of Russia southward was resumed with the acquirement by force of arms of former Persian provinces in the Trans-Caucasus, including Erivan, Baku and Derbent. In the latter part of the nineteenth century the Russian frontier with Persia in the east was brought to the southeastern shores of the Caspian upon the incorporation of the territory of the Turcoman tribes within the Russian Empire. These developments, taken in conjunction with the systematic purchase of great tracts of land in north Persia on the eve of the war, with the presence at the same time of Russian troops in Tabriz ostensibly for the maintenance of "law and order," and with the general supineness shown by the Persian Government of the Kajars toward the increasing intermixture of Russia in Persian internal affairs, were generally accepted as portending the eventual absorption of north Persia by Russia.

The virtual inevitability of such a development had come to be accepted even by Great Britain; and this despite the challenge offered by the British as early as the sixteenth century to Russian supremacy on the Caspian, a challenge which had been taken up with greater energy in the nineteenth century after the incorporation of India in the British Empire and after Great Britain had come to be preoccupied with guarding the approaches to the Indian Empire. The extent of this rivalry over the prostrate form of Persia and the course of its development is discussed elsewhere



in this work; here the discussion is limited to such a consideration of its course as concerns the Caspian provinces.

In the sixteenth century neither England nor Russia had attained anything approaching their present status either in territorial extent or power. Another century was to elapse before Peter the Great made Russia a power to be reckoned with and greatly extended its territories. England, on the other hand, in the sixteenth century was only on the eve of its great political and commercial rise to power.

In 1557, only a few years before the establishment of the Virginia Company of London, there was formed in England the Muscovite Company for the promotion of English trade with Russia and central Asia. Anthony Jenkinson, the first English traveler to Persia of whom there is record, with a number of associates crossed Russia overland to Bokhara, passing by the Caspian Sea over which the English flag was displayed by him for the first time. In 1562 he journeyed from Gilan to Kazvin and there presented a letter from Queen Elizabeth to Shah Tahmasp, who ordered him out of the country alleging that Persia had no need of the friendship of infidels. A successor sent by the Muscovite Company was more favorably received, but in 1581 the company decided to abandon its efforts to promote commercial relations with Persia.

However, in 1742 a further effort to this end, involving the shipment direct to England across Russia of Gilan silk and its exchange for English woollens, was made by the London merchant adventurers, John Elton and Jonas Hanway. Their efforts, however, were eventually cut short by a decree of Catherine I in 1746 putting an abrupt end to British trade by way of the Caspian. The chief grievance of Russia against this new commerce was that Elton had entered the service of Nadir Shah and had undertaken to instruct the Persians in shipbuilding, or, as stated in the decree terminating this trade, had "introduced some arts hitherto unknown among them, to the great detriment of this empire." As Hanway remarks, the project "hardly began to blossom before it was blasted." Before Hanway and his associates

could liquidate their enterprise they had suffered a loss of thousands of pounds in the robbery of their stores at Resht upon the death of Nadir Shah in 1747. Happily, although the trade was profitless, it gave occasion for one of the most incomparable accounts of Persia at that period, composed by Jonas Hanway.

Thereafter British efforts to dispute the control of the Caspian by Russia were abandoned until 1918. In that year, after the collapse of Tsarist Russia and the advent to power of the Bolsheviks, Commodore Norris of the British Navy again raised the British flag on the Caspian. He was supporting the White Armies of Denikin operating against the Soviet power. General Dunsterville made a dash with his "Hush-Hush" forces in the same year from Kazvin by way of Enzeli to Baku. The British were dislodged after a brief stay and obliged to retreat to Persia. Their effort to extend their influence to north Persia and the Caucasus and Trans-Caspia was brought to a final end in 1920 with the retreat of the forces established in Gilan after a short but conclusive engagement with Soviet troops at Enzeli. For a time, from June 6, 1920, to October, 1921, a Soviet Republic of Gilan established its power in Resht with the support of Persian revolutionaries, assisted by Bolsheviks from Baku. With the establishment of diplomatic relations between the Soviet Union and Persia at the end of 1920, the conclusion of a treaty between the two countries on February 26, 1921, and the removal of Russian support from the Resht Government, the Soviet movement in Persia collapsed. Since that date, while the northern provinces continue to be bound indissolubly from an economic point of view to the Soviet Union, their territorial absorption by the U. S. S. R. is no longer a subject of concern to Persia.

It is only within recent years that the great physical barrier offered by the Elburz Mountains to communication between the Caspian provinces and Teheran has been opened by roads suitable for wheeled traffic. In the last years of the nineteenth century the first step to this end was taken by the building of such a road from Enzeli to Kazvin by Russians under a monopoly concession from the Persian Government. A similar concession on which

much less work was undertaken was acquired in 1914 by a Russian company for the road from Meshed-i-Sar on the Caspian to Teheran. Both of these concessions reverted to the Persian Government in 1921 under a treaty by which the Soviet Union made over as a gift all concessions acquired in the past from Persia by Russian subjects or by the Tsarist Government. Neither of the two roads, however, was brought to anything like its present state of suitability for heavy motor traffic until the inauguration of a great roadbuilding program on Reza Shah Pahlevi's accession to the throne in 1926.

Since that date, moreover, a third route from Teheran to the Caspian was opened in 1933 by way of Karaj across the mountains to Chalus on the Sea. This road, cut over the summits of the virgin mountains and one of the most beautiful scenic routes in the country, reduces the distance from Teheran to the Caspian to one hundred and twenty miles, as compared with two hundred and ten miles from Teheran by way of Firouzkuh to Meshed-i-Sar, and two hundred and twenty-six miles to Pahlevi (Enzeli) by way of Kazvin and Resht.

The Chalus road, as it is called, taking off from Karaj, twenty-four miles west of Teheran, abruptly ascends the great Elburz Mountains, and passes by a series of switchbacks to the very summit of the mountains themselves, ten thousand or more feet in height. Thereafter it descends along the wild and rugged slopes to the Sea at Chalus where a comfortable hotel was erected in 1934 in the midst of the wooded foothills descending to the very shores of the Caspian. From Karaj to Chalus is one hundred and seven miles. Sixty miles west on the Caspian shore are the sulphur baths and modern summer resort of Ab-i-Garm.

Mazanderan, the larger of the two northern provinces bordering the Caspian, extends from the eastern extremity of that Sea along the narrow strip of coastland between the summit of the mountains and the Caspian for a distance westward of some two hundred and twenty miles. There it adjoins Gilan which occupies the western end of the Caspian coast. Gilan is the Cadusii of the Greeks and the Gelae of Pliny, while Mazanderan, meaning the

land enclosed by the mountains, is a comparatively modern term for the region, having come into use only since the thirteenth century in substitution for Tabaristan. More anciently Mazanderan, as well as parts of the adjoining provinces of Gilan and Asterabad, comprised a region known to Herodotus and the Greeks generally as Hyrcania, which, with Media and Parthia, formed a satrapy of Darius the Great.

Proceeding by way of the Meshed gate from Teheran, the road to Meshed-i-Sar in Mazanderan follows the main Meshed highway as far as Firouzkuh, a distance of some eighty-eight miles. Some fifteen miles from Teheran it descends by a winding series of switchbacks from the plateau into the valley of the Jajerud. Traversing the river of that name it bisects the pleasant villages of Bumehin and Rudehin, the latter of particular attractiveness in the spring and summer because of the dense shade given by the numerous poplar trees planted in the midst of the town. The masses of foliage surrounding Rudehin at such times stand in refreshing contrast with the aridity and barrenness of the adjacent sun-baked hills. They make understandable as nothing else can that delight of the Persian in the merest trickle of running water and in the least vestige of verdure revealed by nature in a country consisting so largely of bleak desert.

A little farther and the road leading to the village of Demavend is passed to the left. The route then continues along the slopes of the Elburz through a succession of oases which represent the sites of villages, until Firouzkuh is at length reached. Thence a road leads to the left beyond the town through the mountain pass of Gaduk (6,620 feet) to Mazanderan.

Mazanderan was no less a favorite resort of Shah Abbas than it has come to be for the present Shah who was born near the shores of the Caspian and who, with the acquirement of much of the land of the fertile province, is displaying the keenest interest in its development. Besides the establishment of the port of Bandar Shah, northern terminus of the Trans-Persian Railway, and the construction of the railway itself, Shah Reza Pahlevi is responsible for the building of the Chalus road, for the opening of a



second new harbor at Delno, for the improvement of the roads and bridges, and for the building of modern hotels at Chalus and Ab-i-Garm. Together these have already given a development to Mazanderan such as no other province in Persia enjoys.

Of the interest of Shah Abbas, all that is left in evidence are the extensive ruins of his palace at Ashraf, near-by pleasure gardens and lodges and the famous causeway which traversed the whole of Mazanderan.

Such was his attachment for Mazanderan that in 1621 he caused a road by way of Firouzkuh to be constructed across the Elburz Mountains to facilitate his progress from the capital at Ispahan to his palace at Ashraf. It was at Ashraf that Sir Dodmore Cotton, the British Ambassador accredited to Shah Abbas, was received with Sir Robert Sherley in 1627, after they had followed the Shah's Court from Ispahan. Incident to this visit, Sir Thomas Herbert, a member of the Ambassador's suite, has left an account of the despotic character of the otherwise great Sefavid monarch and of that complete disregard for human life which has distinguished Persian sovereigns throughout history. Leaving Ashraf for a canter, Shah Abbas's horse was startled by the snore of a poor man asleep in the field. Whereupon the Shah drew his bow and "sent an eternal arrow of sleep into the poor man's heart: jesting, I did the man no wrong; I found him sleeping and asleep I left him."

Along the present way from Firouzkuh through the mountains to the Caspian, which follows at times the foundations of the old road of Shah Abbas, there is being brought to completion, with infinite toil and amazing ingenuity, the northern section of the Trans-Persian Railway. From Bandar Shah the railway winds like a great snake over the slopes of the mountains. It makes its way by means of no less than eighty-four tunnels, one almost two miles in extent, through the mountainsides before reaching the Iranian plateau at Firouzkuh.

Many technical problems of great interest have been presented in the construction of the railway which passes from the Caspian plain to an altitude of 6,930 feet in seventy miles. The main-

tenance of the gradient within the allowed limit of two and eight-tenths per cent has necessitated the construction of a number of spiral tunnels. In not a few instances no less than three sections of the track are situated one above the other on the same mountain slope. The entire northern section of the line is expected to be in working order as far as Teheran by 1937. Thence the railway will proceed south through Kum, Sultanabad and Malayer, and meet the southern section of the road, now being extended from Salehabad, a little south of Borujerd.

From Firouzkuh both the railway and the highway begin their long ascent of the mountains leading through precipitous gorges to the Caspian. Twelve miles south of Firouzkuh and half a mile south of the head of the Gaduk Pass there is located one of the many caravanserais built by Shah Abbas. Near by, perched upon a rocky precipice, which has all the appearance of closing the pass, are the ruins of the castle of Kalip, a bandit chief of the time of Shah Abbas.

As the road descends precipitously from the Gaduk Pass, winding its way through sublime gorges, there occurs one of the most sudden transformations of nature to be found probably anywhere in Asia. The bleak and barren aspect of desert, presented generally by the Iranian plateau, is abruptly left behind. There succeeds, in the descent to the farther northward slopes of the mountains, first stunted shrubbery, then ever increasingly dense foliage and vegetation, until the full and veritable jungle is reached which encompasses the whole of Mazanderan and Gilan.

This jungle, semi-tropical in character, filled with the incessant chattering of millions of bright-plumed birds of innumerable varieties, and the refuge of numerous wild animals, including the bear, the leopard and the wild boar, has its origin in the peculiar atmospheric conditions brought about by the conjunction of the high Elburz Mountains with the Caspian Sea. The moisture from the Sea rises perpetually in clouds which break themselves against the summits of the mountains. The dissolvent process is furthered by the currents of hot air flowing in a northeasterly direction from the Great Salt Desert of the plateau region. The result is that

Mazanderan and Gilan enjoy an extraordinary amount of rainfall. Unfortunately, this precipitation is not an unmixed blessing for, besides serving the development of nature in all its manifestations, it is equally conducive to the development of ague and fever because of stagnant marshlands in the foothills.

From the Gaduk Pass to Shahi, formerly known as Aliabad, the first considerable town to be reached in Mazanderan, is some fifty-six miles, or a hundred and fifty-five miles from Teheran. With its fairly comfortable hotel, its new cotton factory and other industrial establishments, Shahi is rapidly becoming a city of some importance. From Shahi the Trans-Persian Railway extends to the modern port of Bandar Shah, a little more than sixty miles, by way of the ancient town of Sari.

Sari, whose history may be said to be an epitome of that of the fortunes or misfortunes of the Caspian provinces, is built on or near one of the oldest habited sites in Persia. It was known to the ancients at various times as Phanaca, Zadracarta and Syrinz. Here Alexander the Great in his great march into Asia halted fifteen days and offered sacrifices to the gods. Burnt by the Slavs, in 910 A. D., sacked by the Mongols three centuries later, its inhabitants massacred by Tamerlane and plundered at various times by the Turcomans from the adjacent steppes, the town has suffered as well from the implacable hand of nature as from the insensate cruelty of man, having been frequently subject to earthquakes, the last occurring in 1935. The Friday Mosque, like so many of the seats of Islamic faith in these regions, was once a Zoroastrian temple. The city was more lately the principal seat of authority of Aga Mohammed Khan before he became the first of the Kajar Shahs and when his jurisdiction did not extend beyond Mazanderan and Asterabad, the original center of Kajar tribal authority.

From Sari, thirteen miles east of Shahi, the way may be made over an indifferent road twenty-three miles farther east to Ashraf which shared with Ispahan the honor of serving as a royal residence of Shah Abbas the Great. Here a series of six royal establishments, rivaling in their prime the architectural gems of

Ispahan, were constructed in the early sixteenth century for that monarch. Of all these, set in the midst of once elaborately laid out gardens and fountains and running streams, little remains, owing to their devastation by the Afghans and the Turcomans, other than a few fragmentary structures slowly disintegrating in the midst of a wilderness of weeds and undergrowth. Of the site, with its palaces and pleasure grounds, extensive and interesting descriptions may be found in the pages of Jonas Hanway of the eighteenth century and in those of Eastwick of the middle of the last century.

Some miles northwest of Ashraf, overlooking the Caspian but unconnected by any road thither, are the ruins of still another stately pleasure domain of Shah Abbas. At Parahabad the great King breathed his last in 1629 after a reign of more than forty years. Built in 1611, the palace was described by Chardin as "a wonder of Art that deserved a kind of perpetuity . . . wherein was kept a vast Treasure of Dishes and Basins of Porcellane or China, Cornaline, Agate, Coral, Amber, Cups of Crystal of the Rock, and other Rarities without number." It was sacked by the picturesque Russian freebooter, Stenka Razin, in 1668, and the great *Ilaouse*, or *Tangi*, "a Jasper Fountain cover'd with Plates of Gold and erected within the Palace," was broken by his followers. Chardin, who saw it both before and after its desolation, was moved mournfully to observe: "Everytime I think of the Magnificence and Delightfulness of that place, I cannot but lament its hard Fate."

The way back to Shahi runs over a good road to Meshed-i-Sar, thirty miles distant on the Caspian via Babol, formerly Barfrush. Babol was founded at the beginning of the sixteenth century on a site known as Manitir. To the southwest are the remains of a royal garden laid out by Shah Abbas. The town itself offers nothing of any interest aside from the restless movement of life in its bazaars.

Meshed-i-Sar, a straggling fishing village of thatch-covered houses, lies at the confluence of the River Babol with the Caspian. The only suitable hostel, the Hotel d'Orient, overlooks the river



and the sea. While its accommodations are none of the best, its lack of comforts is in part compensated for by its pleasant situation and the view from its veranda. Typical of the East was the remark of the proprietor when I prepared to pay my bill, that I might pay whatever I liked, a cunning device to extract double the amount due.

The only historical monument of any note in the town is one of those omnipresent *imamsadehs* whose small domes, enclosing a saint's tomb, decorate the landscape of almost every village in Persia. The *imamsadeh* at Meshed-i-Sar contains four doors of carved wood, all bearing inscriptions of their makers. The oldest, the eastern door, records that it was built in 1437 by a carpenter, Ustad Mohammed, under orders of the Seyyid Aziz.

#### 4. *Meshed-i-Sar to Pahlevi and Return to Teheran*

Only a few years ago the way from Meshed-i-Sar westward along the Caspian Coast to Resht and Pahlevi was an almost impenetrable jungle and swamp. Few were the European travelers who ventured to make the journey, and then only with the aid of experienced guides familiar with the footpaths and trails which afforded the only means of traversing the jungle's depths which extend to the very shores of the sea.

The most common road or track was that along the beach. Under the present Shah an excellent gravel-surfaced road, suitable for motor traffic, has recently been completed. Its many substantial bridges give easy access over the streams issuing into the Caspian from ranges which front the Sea along the entire extent of Mazanderan.

There can be few more scenically beautiful roads in the world than this new highway which skirts the Caspian shore from Meshed-i-Sar to Rudisar for more than one hundred and fifty miles. On the one side is the Sea and on the other the lofty Elburz Mountains rising in all their magnificent glory to a height of more than ten thousand feet. Their densely wooded northern slopes descend now abruptly in rugged crags almost to the shores

of the Sea, or open in a succession of terraces to make way for rich rice fields or for the cultivation of tea and cotton. When the indefinable charm of Persia has become better known to the world, with its astonishing varieties of scenery and its treasure house of monuments commemorative of the cultural past of the race, the road between Meshed-i-Sar and Resht will prove one of the major goals of those alike sensitive to beauty and to the martyrdom through which man has passed on his toilsome ascent from the beast to a semi-civilized state.

Not only do Mazanderan and Gilan stand in sharp contrast with the remainder of Persia in point of their fauna and flora, but the very homes of the inhabitants are wholly unlike those of the Persians of the plateau, and the people themselves differ from other Persians in their peculiar dialect and to some extent in their attire. For here is a veritable cauldron into which have been cast Scythians and Medes, Hyrcanians and Parthians, Romans and Greeks, Turks and Tartars, Arabs and Armenians, Jews and Gentiles, Circassians and Slavs.

Houses of sun-dried brick are employed not only elsewhere in Persia but throughout the East, wherever the intense heat of the sun in summer and the cold in winter make such structures peculiarly adapted to the needs of the inhabitants in the absence of wood. But houses of the people of Mazanderan and Gilan are generally of wood with thatched roofs. In the case of the dwellings of the more well-to-do in the towns, the roofs are of striking red tiles. Here timber, so scarce an item in the economy of the Persian desert, is readily available, and the excessive rainfall characteristic of the Caspian provinces throughout the year imposes upon their inhabitants the use of a material for roofs more resistant than sun-dried bricks. As it is, even on the Persian plateau, the sun-dried brick roofs all too often collapse under unusual falls of snow or rain in the late winter and early spring.

A curious feature of the landscape of these provinces is the presence, everywhere in the villages, of thatched huts raised from the ground level on wooden supports, an almost indispensable adjunct of every dwelling whose owners can afford the additional

structure. Refuge is taken to these raised rooms in summer to escape at night the intolerable moistness of the ground and to avoid the consequent agues and fevers. Still another interesting distinctive feature is the character of the mosques with their verandas and strikingly colored pictures decorating the outer walls.

Although cotton, tea, rice and silk cocoons are raised in other parts of Persia, the Caspian provinces are most notable for their production. The extensive rice fields, overspread with thin layers of water in clearings here and there in the thick jungle, are one of the most conspicuous features of the landscape.

From Meshed-i-Sar westward a succession of picturesque thatch-covered houses collected in villages are passed in the midst of the cleared and cultivated land which has been reclaimed from the jungle. The road winds now along the very shores of the Sea or penetrates the forest land for a few miles, before emerging again upon the beach. Occasionally snakes are to be seen darting from the road, where they have been sunning themselves, into the recesses of the jungle, or the tail of a fox or mountain leopard is revealed for a brief instant flashing in hurried flight across the way. And forever above the ceaseless sobbing dirge of the near-by surf there rises the superb concert of nature in the chorused songs of a thousand birds.

Twenty-six miles west of Meshed-i-Sar on the highway along the Caspian is the village of Mahmudabad from which the interesting town of Amol is separated by only a short distance northward from the main road. Amol, once a principal city of Mazanderan, was sacked by Tamerlane in 1392. The Mesjid-i-Imam Hassan Mosque dates from the time of Haroun-al-Raschid.

Amol contains in its northwest precincts the shrine of Mir Kiwamud-Din-al-Marashi (1379 A. D.), founder of a local dynasty of *seyyids*, or descendants of the Prophet, who ruled Mazanderan from 1359 to 1581 A. D., during the turbulent Middle Ages. Known as Mashad-i-Mir-i-Buzurg, the shrine, octagonal in form and entered by a lofty gateway, is a circular tower with a low dome, the whole formerly covered with glazed tiles.

Redolent of the *Arabian Nights* is the tale told of a Governor in the Middle Ages who, suspicious of the loyalty of the inhabitants, had his death proclaimed and every preparation made for his funeral. When many of the townspeople had begun to give full vent to the expression of their joy over his supposed demise, the Governor issued from his hiding place and ordered the execution of the most conspicuous rejoicers.

Thirty-three miles west of Mahmudabad is the village of Dehno where a Dutch company has recently begun the work of constructing a modern harbor on the Caspian. Supplementing the port of Bandar Shah in the southeastern corner of the Caspian and of Pahlevi at the southwestern end, Dehno lies almost equi-distant between them. A few miles east of Dehno the road is joined at Chalus by the new road from Teheran where, at the point of conjunction of the two highways by the Sea, a modern hotel has been built.

However attractive the situation of the hotel at Chalus, with the Caspian in the foreground and the mountains forming an enormous backdrop, the site is indisputably exceeded in beauty by the extensive establishment of Ab-i-Garm, situated some fifty miles west of Dehno. A hotel and a sanitarium, with numerous bungalows as dependencies, have been built around the sulphur springs at Ab-i-Garm (meaning "warm water"), which range in temperature from ninety-eight degrees to one hundred and fourteen degrees Fahrenheit. A side road leads off the principal highway to the modern baths and to the hotel, perched in the midst of the thick forest of the mountainside and giving a superb view of the Sea.

From this isolated resort, where the traveler finds greater comforts in the combined pleasures of the mountains and the sea than are available anywhere else in Persia, the road leaves the Caspian at Rudisar, thirty-one miles distant, and enters Gilan. It continues westward where the mountains begin their gradual withdrawal from the Sea, and reaches Langerud, thirteen miles farther, followed closely by Lahijan, six miles beyond, and, finally, Resht, twenty-five miles distant.



Langerud is first mentioned in history in 1118 A. D. The English traveler to the Caspian, Hanway, in the eighteenth century remarked of it that, if Gilan be considered the sink-hole of Persia, Langerud was the cesspool of Gilan.

The Friday Mosque of Langerud, built over an ancient Zoroastrian temple, has an origin attributed to it by the inhabitants characteristic in its novelty of Persia and the East. A merchant from some distance, it is related, sent one of his black slaves to Langerud to buy merchandise, but the slave instead devoted the sum entrusted to him to the building of a mosque. Upon returning to his master he explained that he had purchased goods but goods which were not of this world. Pressed for the truth, the slave became less metaphorical and more explicit regarding what he had done, but his master, far from giving way to anger, expressed approval of his deed by giving him his liberty.

It is only for one who has lived in Persia that the credibility of the story may not be questioned. But then, in Persia, many things are stranger than the strangest fiction, and among them, the daily reproduction of the themes of the *Arabian Nights*. As the honest Jonas Hanway observed, "the genius of the Eastern nations necessarily gives their history the air of romance."

Langerud's neighbor, Lahijan, is one of the oldest towns of the province with a conspicuous broad *meidan*, enclosed by the booths of merchants. Near by is a tomb, known as that of the Four Kings, of a local dynasty which ruled Gilan in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. The inscriptions in Kufic are of particular beauty. One of the doors of the sanctuary bears the date of 1389 A. D.

Of Resht and Pahlevi and of their varied fortunes during and immediately after the World War, when Resht was the capital of a short-lived Soviet Republic, and Pahlevi was for a time a battleground of opposing Soviet and British forces, enough has already been written.

The modern development of Pahlevi, including Kazian, dates from 1895, when a concession for the port was granted for a period of seventy-five years to a Russian company. Previously,

in 1876, a concession for the fishing rights in Persian waters of the Caspian had been accorded by the Government to Stefan Lionosoff, a Russian subject, a concession periodically renewed to the enormous profit of the concessionaire. Lenzi became the headquarters of the Caspian Sea Fisheries. Of the many concessions relinquished by the Soviet Union in the treaty concluded with Persia in 1921, reservations were alone made in respect of the Caspian Fisheries, it being stipulated that, upon the expiration of the private concession, the Fisheries should be made the subject of a special agreement between the two governments.

The importance of the Caspian Fisheries to Russia arises from the extraordinary circumstances surrounding the life-history of the sturgeon, the most important fish inhabiting those waters. Source of the rich caviar, the sturgeon, although common to the Caspian generally, are accustomed, so far as concerns its southern waters, to seek a retreat in the Persian rivers emptying into the Sea, for the purpose of laying their eggs at periodic intervals. The newly born sturgeon subsequently proceed out to Sea and, upon reaching maturity after some eleven years, return to the Persian rivers to deposit their eggs in the endless cycle of sturgeon history. Although born in Persian waters, the sturgeon, under such rules of international law as govern the lives of fishes, possess a mixed Soviet-Persian nationality by virtue of the permanent residence established in waters over which the two countries jointly exercise sovereignty.

It was only on October 1, 1927, as a part of the general settlement of outstanding differences between Persia and the Soviet Union, that an understanding was reached about the Fisheries. The agreement provided for mixed Soviet-Persian control for a period of twenty-five years, with a larger share of the profits, however, accruing to Persia. The agreement is interesting in that it probably constitutes a unique instance of the participation of two governments in a commercial undertaking.

Pahlevi and Kazian, accordingly, continue to retain a marked Russian atmosphere, and to reflect the close proximity of Russia. This is accentuated by the presence of numbers of Russians, the

sound on all sides of the Russian language, the appearance of Russian signs on the shops and of Russian goods within their interiors. Baku is but a day's voyage across the Caspian. Soviet vessels ply hither and thither flying the red flag which, for Persia, has brought assurance of a peace and a real independence in its internal affairs such as the country never enjoyed in the presence of the flag of the Russian Empire.

The return to Teheran from Pahlevi is made through Resht and thence across the Elburz Mountains by way of Kazvin. Although not as precipitous as either the Chalus road or the road from Firouzkuh to Meshed-i-Sar, it fully equals the picturesque scenery of those other routes; indeed, for mountain scenery, these three highways, together with that from Sultanabad to Salehabad through Luristan, stand apart from all other roads in Persia.

From Resht the road passes through alternate rice fields and forests, where the traveler is again impressed with the amazingly rich vegetation and the dense semi-tropical growth which Gilan shares with Mazanderan. The road follows close to the Sefid Rud River or at times immediately alongside its banks as the winding ascent is made of the mountains. Fifty miles from Resht we are in the very heart of the mountains at Rudbar where scattered groves of olive trees have replaced the thick jungle of the most northerly slopes of the Elburz. Halfway between Rudbar and Menjil, distant only six miles from the former, are the remains of an old fortress in the middle of the Sefid Rud. A little beyond the fortress to the south are the ruins of a bridge which the traveler Olearius noted as having been destroyed by the army of Alexander the Great.

As my automobile glided swiftly over the hard-surfaced road of a route along which many of the conquering armies of the past had marched to dispute the mastership of Persia, I was moved to the reflection, to which one constantly returns in a consideration of the astonishing history of the country, of how through all vicissitudes of fortune the national spirit has maintained its vitality, gathering to itself sustenance for a new revival even in the darkest moments.

It was along this road that Dunsterville made his dash on Baku in 1918 in the first and last effort of the British to extend their authority from beyond south Persia to the north as far as the Caucasus, when Persian neutrality was treated as if non-existent. Some measure of the remarkable progress made by Persia since that time may be had by a reference to Dunsterville's account of his expedition as given in the *Adventures of Dunsterforce*. That account displays an almost unbelievable medley of brutal cynicism and childish naïveté—unbelievable unless one is cognizant of the absence generally of a sense of the philosophy of history on the part of most military minds. Dunsterville calculated that Persia might be able to assert its sovereignty sufficiently to "turn out the Europeans in 1963." But he could not bring himself to make that admission without the qualification expressed to a Persian that "even then (in 1963) you must remember that you will only be 'trying' to turn them out, which is a very different thing from turning them out."

Well, as Dunsterville's gallant and distinguished fellow countrymen, Edward Browne and Wilfred Blunt, would have been the first to acclaim, history has belied his prophecy by more than a generation. The foreigners were turned out some years ago to make possible the assertion of a greater measure of independence than Persia has enjoyed since the intrigues of Napoleon reduced her to a catspaw of the Powers. Out of the despised forces of 1918 Reza Shah Pahlevi has developed an army whose maneuvers in 1935 evoked the admiration of all foreigners who witnessed them. But then, Dunsterville ignored all possibility of the emergence of a fourth great dynasty in succession to the Achæmenian, the Sassanian and the Sefavid, namely, the Pahlevi, with the historical task entrusted to it of renewing that Persian national spirit which may long lie dormant between periods of rejuvenation but which never altogether dies.

Menjil, where the last traces of the vegetation of the Caspian provinces are left behind, lies south of a narrow gap in the mountains. Through this gap blows an almost perpetual hurricane occasioned by the meeting of the warm air of the plateau with the



cool moist air arising from the Sea. Sixty-seven miles beyond lies Kazvin and eighty-seven miles farther, Teheran, over the undulating barren southern slopes of the Elburz. Not even on the Firouzkuh-Meshed-i-Sar road is the sudden transformation from the jungle of the Caspian provinces to the desert land of the great Iranian plateau more suddenly marked than on the road from Resht to Kazvin.

These sudden transformations of nature, which are so accentuated between the Caspian and the plateau, and of which the oases dotting the plateau in the form of villages with rich verdure sustained by precious sources of water are also examples, may be taken in a way as symbolical of the life of man in Persia.

Four oases stand out in Persian history, represented by the Achæmenian, the Sassanian, the Sefavid and the Pahlevi periods. Between are the dark eras of the Macedonian, the Arab and the Mongolian conquests, and, more lately, the shadows cast over national development by the Kajars. But, throughout history, at the end there emerges the renewed life-giving force springing from a seemingly irrepressible fount of national consciousness. Even as at the end of the traveler's long journey over the barren Persian plain, the life-giving properties of water, so long absent, have made possible the development of a habited site where man and nature may find sustenance, so at the end of the dark reign of the Kajars the spirit of Persia has once again found renewal and leaps once more potently into life.

## CHAPTER XI

### MODERN PERSIAN HISTORY IN THE LIGHT OF ANGLO-RUSSIAN RIVALRY

#### *1. Introduction*

THE modern history of Persia revolves in the main around Anglo-Russian rivalry which followed before 1914 an even and consistent line. Of the many cataclysmic changes occasioned by the war none has perhaps been more far-reaching or possessed greater world significance than the changes in the character of that rivalry growing out of the Russian Revolution, itself a product of the war.

Only in considering the transformation of these relations may the modern history of Persia be adequately interpreted, and a key found to an understanding of these international rivalries on the larger stage of the Middle and Far East, where national-liberation movements, unleashed by the influence of the Russian Revolution, have created more formidable problems than imperialism has ever had hitherto to face.

Persia's position before the war was that of a chessboard on which its sovereign and his principal Ministers of State were but pawns manipulated at will by Russia and Great Britain in the fulfillment of those imperialist designs and policies which so particularly characterized pre-war international politics.

For a hundred years, from the time of the Napoleonic wars until early in the twentieth century, Persia was caught as in a vise between the two mighty nations touching its borders: the one, Russia, whose territory extended over one fifth of the surface of the earth, and the other, the British Empire, exercising dominion over a quarter of the globe. As Russia extended its territories southward, incorporating the Caucasus and Turkestan within its

borders, and as Great Britain, for the better protection of India, extended its influence in Afghanistan and south Persia, it seemed that Persia eventually was destined to pass the way of other once great nations and to lose its national identity.

Yet today Persia stands forth with a greater measure of independence and with less impairment of its national integrity than at any time in its history since the days of Nadir Shah, the conqueror of India, in the eighteenth century.

By what extraordinary means has this transformation been effected, from a state over which Russia and Great Britain, under a joint imperialist condominium, dictated before the war the major domestic and foreign policies of Persia, to one in which those same Powers have come to manifest every solicitude for the maintenance unimpaired of Persian sovereignty?

The answer, it is believed, may be found in the transformation of the conflict between Russia and Great Britain in Persia. Before the war that conflict was one between two rival imperialisms; today the conflict is one between the forces of socialism, as represented by the U. S. S. R., and the forces of imperialism, as represented by the British Empire, seeking to adapt itself as far as possible to the new ways of a new world.

## *2. Anglo-Russian Rivalry before the War*

From the days when Napoleon nursed the dream of invading India with the help of Russia, Great Britain has contemplated with apprehension the invasion of India, that "jewel of the British crown," by Russia through Afghanistan or Persia.

In 1907, under the Anglo-Russian Convention, a truce was concluded between those Powers in the Middle East. In Persia this took the form of the division of the country into rival spheres of influence with the assignment to Great Britain of south Persia and to Russia of north Persia.

During the latter part of the nineteenth and the first part of the twentieth century until the World War, these same Powers consolidated their hold upon Persia by the exaction of a series of

economic concessions: the Russians, in various railway, port, highway, mining, banking and telegraph concessions in north Persia, and the British, in various mining, telegraph, tobacco and banking concessions, not least important of which was that represented by the concession held by the Anglo-Persian Oil Company.

On the eve of the World War there was every indication of Russia's intention eventually to absorb northern Persia and to incorporate it in the territory of its Empire. Economically and geographically the northern Persian provinces are bound closer to Russia than to Persia. The great Elburz Mountains running east and west but a little south of the Caspian Sea interpose an effectual obstacle to easy means of communication between those provinces and the plateau region of central Persia, while the Caspian Sea affords them a convenient and easy means of access to Russia. The geographical factor alone makes, and must continue to make, the northern Persian provinces dependent upon Russia for an outlet for the rice and cotton grown along the Caspian. On the other hand, the comparatively easy access of Russian goods to north Persia, where two-thirds of the population of the country is centered, makes, and will continue to make, Persia dependent upon the Soviet Union for a large proportion of its purchases of foreign goods.

Before the war, considerations of the larger imperialist policies of Great Britain and Russia, and considerations having to do with the furtherance of their special aims and interests in Persia, made the British and Russian Legations in Teheran the final arbiters in all important decisions confronting the Persian Government.

Probably in no quarter of the globe, every corner of which in the spring of 1914 was distinguished by the conflicting interests of imperialist finance, was the play of such forces revealed with more unashamed nakedness than in Persia. There is little doubt that the indignation of such observers of the Persian scene as W. Morgan Shuster (*The Strangling of Persia*), and the British authority on Persia, Professor E. G. Browne, was aroused less by the prevalence of a state of affairs common to most colonial



and Eastern countries, than by the undisguised character of Russian exploitation of Persia, which Great Britain was compelled by circumstances reluctantly to condone.

### 3. *Persia's Situation during the War*

If anything were needed to demonstrate the complete impotence of Persia before Russia and Great Britain it is to be had in the presence of a brigade of Russian troops in northern Persia at the outbreak of the war. These troops had been introduced in 1909 with the sanction of Great Britain, for the purpose of exercising "a steadying influence" on the revolution of that year.

Moreover, in the early months of the war, a brigade of British troops was landed in south Persia to protect the property of the Anglo-Persian Oil Company, while in 1916 the British authorities solicited the enlistment of Persians in the South Persian Rifles commanded by British officers.

For all Persia's declaration of neutrality in 1914, Persian soil became the battleground of Turkish and Russian troops in the north and of Turkish and British troops in the south.

Further, among the secret treaties concluded by the Allies, that of 1915 signed in Petrograd between Great Britain, Russia and France provided for the extension of the British sphere of influence to include the so-called neutral sphere previously separating the British sphere in the south from the Russian in the north.

In Persia feeling became general that one of the inevitable consequences of the "war to make the world safe for democracy" was to be the final disappearance of even any pretense of Persian sovereignty. Subsequent developments did nothing to lessen that feeling of apprehension and insecurity regarding Persia's position after the war, although no reckoning had as yet been taken in Persian calculations of the Russian Revolution and of the profound consequences which that historical process was destined to exert not alone in Persia but throughout the whole of the East.

#### 4. *Soviet Eastern Policy in Theory and Its Roots in Leninism*

What has since become known as Soviet Eastern Policy has its roots so deeply embedded in the doctrine elaborated by Lenin that it may truly be said that Soviet Eastern Policy is nothing more than the application of the principles of Leninism.

Lenin's most important and original contribution to Marxist theory, it is generally recognized, was in his analysis of imperialism. He described it as "the last stage in the development of capitalism." Lenin offered the explanation that the failure of the European proletariat to revolt against capitalism, as Marx had foreshadowed, was due to the surplus value which, realized by Western imperialism from the exploitation of colonial peoples, was partly passed on to the leaders of the European working classes "in the form of various bribes." These caused them to identify themselves with the interests of the capitalist rather than with those of the working class. •

• Consequently, Lenin conceived the destruction of the economic and political hold of the West over the East as striking at the Achilles-heel of capitalism. And so, as early as 1915, in considering the program of action of the Bolsheviks should a revolution place them in power during the World War, he indicated that they would first of all propose peace to the world on the basis of the self-determination of all colonies and non-sovereign peoples. Foreseeing that such a condition would never prove acceptable to the belligerents, he envisaged, following their refusal, the rousing of the proletariat in the West to insurrection—an attack upon the *front line of capitalism—at the same time that a blow against the rear* was delivered by inciting the East to revolt.

And such, it may be added, was the policy subsequently pursued by the Soviet Government once its peace proposals to the world were rejected in 1918, and Russia had been invaded by the Allies. Appeals to the Eastern peoples to revolt against their foreign masters and to the Western proletariat to revolt against their governments—such were the dual sides of Soviet foreign

policy during the period, extending from 1917 to 1921, which has since become known as militant communism.

With the outbreak of the Revolution in February, 1917, Lenin returned to Russia from his exile in Zurich. Hardly had he arrived in Petrograd when he began promptly that merciless hammering of the Provisional Government's war and foreign policy which did so much to discredit it in the eyes of the masses thirsting for peace. Even before his return, he had seized upon that government's first public announcement of its purpose to maintain the foreign policies of the Tsarist régime, writing that the new government could not bring the peace which all people desired because it represented the capitalists and was to them bound by treaties and financial obligations. There was as much sense in expecting the Provisional Government of Guchkov and Miliukov to conclude an honest peace, Lenin declared after reaching Petrograd, as in the "appeal of the kindly village priest to the landlords and merchants to live a godly life." The landlords and merchants, he averred, continued none the less to oppress and rob the people, while extolling the priest's ability to console and pacify the peasants.

When street fighting developed in Petrograd on May 4, 1917, in protest against the declaration of the Provisional Government's intention to pursue the war "to a decisive victory," Lenin interpreted the rioting as the opposition of the masses to war aims which included annexations and predatory policies in Persia and elsewhere. But, said Lenin, to hope that the capitalist class would mend its ways and give up its profits was nothing but an empty dream. Such opinions, he observed, betrayed an ignorance of the fact that wars are conducted by governments, that governments represent the interests of certain classes, and that the war was being waged on behalf of those classes for predatory interests. The masses, he contended, should be told the truth, that governments of capitalists cannot reject annexations.

Bowing before the unloosed storm, Guchkov and Miliukov, who had supported the annexation of Constantinople and the Straits, resigned. Lenin persisted, however, in contending that

the transformation of the Cabinet had changed nothing. He instanced that Russia was continuing to fight for territorial acquisitions, while the secret treaties continued to be kept secret.

Later, in a speech delivered on June 22, 1917, in which he sketched the broad outlines of the Eastern Policy of the Bolshevik Party and envisaged with precision its consequences, Lenin declared:

Russia cannot be stricken out of the war alone. But Russia has mighty allies who keep on growing. They do not as yet have faith in you, because your position has been so contradictory and naive, because you have been advising other peoples to renounce annexations while you are introducing them in your own country. To other peoples you say: "Overthrow your bankers," yet you do not overthrow your own bankers.

Lenin suggested the adoption of a different policy, namely, the publication of the secret treaties, the renunciation of annexations, and a break with the Anglo-French, no less than with the German, capitalists. "If you do the things you have talked about," he observed, (adding that "in politics words are not given much credence, and for good reason") then the Russian masses would win the support, in their own internal struggle, of the "oppressed workers of all countries"—the European proletariat and all the downtrodden nationalities of the East.

To the argument that Russia could not get along without financial support from England and France, Lenin expressed the view that such support might be likened to the rope which supports a hanged man. Moreover, the pursuit of a policy which offered self-determination to the peoples of Russia and of the territories controlled by Russia, as well as to colonial peoples under the domination of the Allies no less than of the Central Powers, would convince the working masses of the West, and also the "oppressed peoples of the East" generally, that the Russian workers' struggle against imperialism was not an empty wish "or a glittering ministerial phrase."



Lenin correctly perceived the powerful influence which a revolutionary Russia would have upon the East. He saw, too, the reaction which national-liberationist struggles, once loosed in the East, would have upon that imperialism which stood in strongest opposition to the development of social revolutionary forces in Russia. As the Russian Revolution of 1905 had had its repercussions in Turkey in 1908, in Persia in 1909, and in China in 1910, so the October Revolution of 1917 was destined, as Lenin with characteristic prescience foresaw, to reverberate through the bazaars of all the countries of the East and to exercise eventually a decisive influence in the reshaping of imperialist policy in India, Afghanistan, China, Egypt and Persia.

#### 5. *Soviet Eastern Policy in Practice*

Lenin's utterances on Bolshevik policy toward Persia and the East had provoked no re-echo in the Iranian bazaars so long as he remained the leader of a relatively obscure minority party. Persians might well be understandably skeptical of political promises made in irresponsible moments before the assumption of office. They might, moreover, reasonably recall with misgiving the protestations made times without number of the respect entertained for the integrity of Persia precisely when occasion was taken to treat the country as a pawn in the game of diplomatic chess between the Powers.

That the man who was now entering the front stage of history was not of the ordinary breed of politicians, however, became abundantly manifest as soon as the Bolsheviks had assumed power on October 22, 1917.

One of the first acts of the Congress of Workmen's, Soldiers' and Peasants' Deputies, assembled the day following the Revolution, was the specific redemption of Lenin's pledges of an immediate peace without annexations. A month later, in a resounding manifesto of Lenin and Stalin addressed to the "Laboring Moslems of Russia and the East," the old Russian predatory and oppressive policy toward the minorities in Russia and toward

Eastern peoples generally was renounced in favor of a policy of complete cultural and national freedom for self-development.

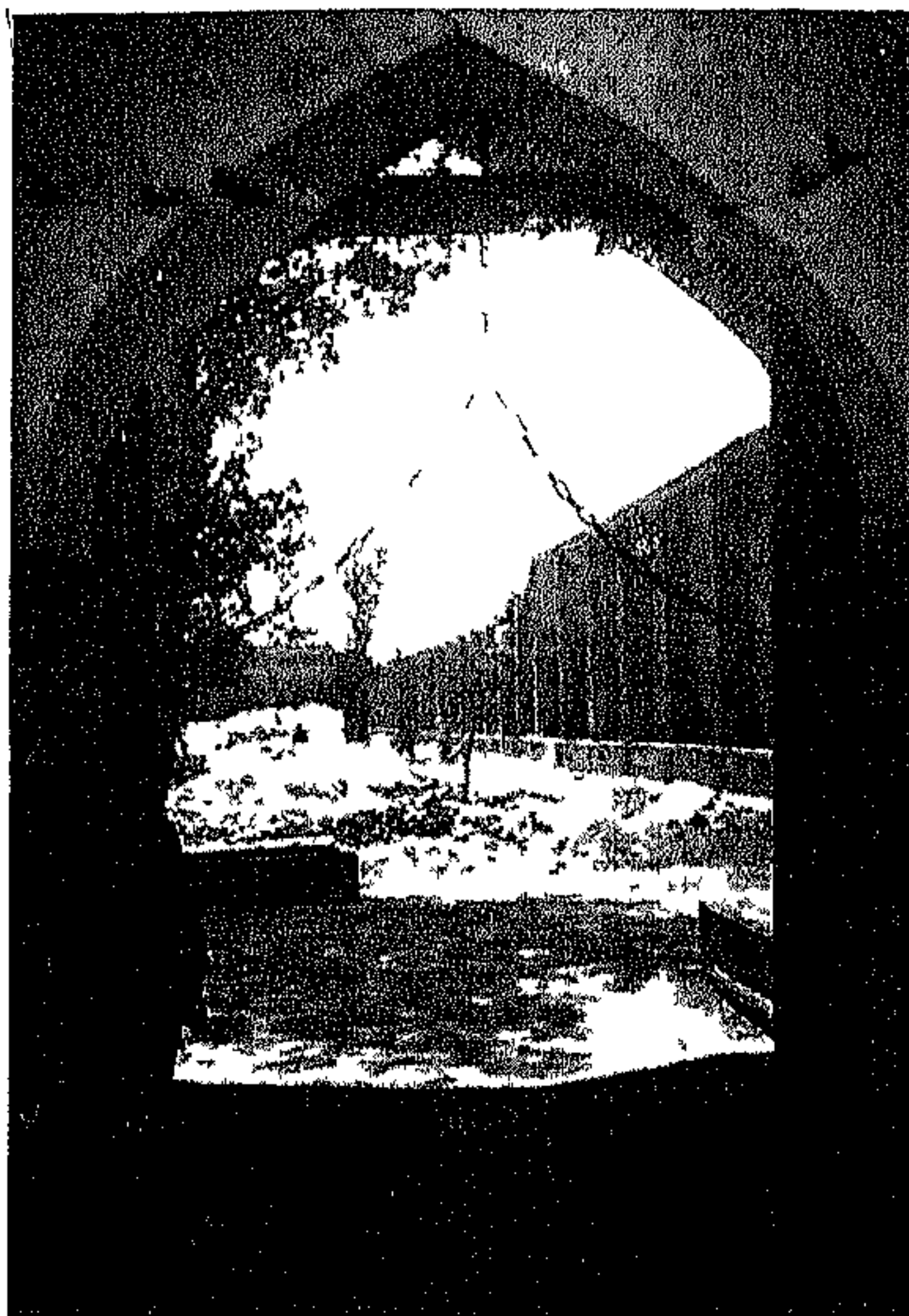
In the fulfillment of these pledges and declarations, orders were soon afterward issued for the evacuation of all Russian troops from Persian soil. And soon, in January, 1918, the Persian Government was formally notified by the Soviet Government of its repudiation of the Anglo-Russian Convention of 1907, dividing Persia into spheres of influence, as well as "the preceding and subsequent treaties which, in whatever form, limit and restrict the right of the Persian people to a free and independent existence." Moreover, to convince the Persian Government of its sincerity, the Soviet Government deputed as its representative in Persia a former Tsarist diplomat, Biavine, who persuaded the Persian Government at length to accept the Soviet offers and to abrogate on July 17, 1918, all Perso-Russian treaties which had been secured "by duress and force or through illegitimate means, such as threats and bribes."

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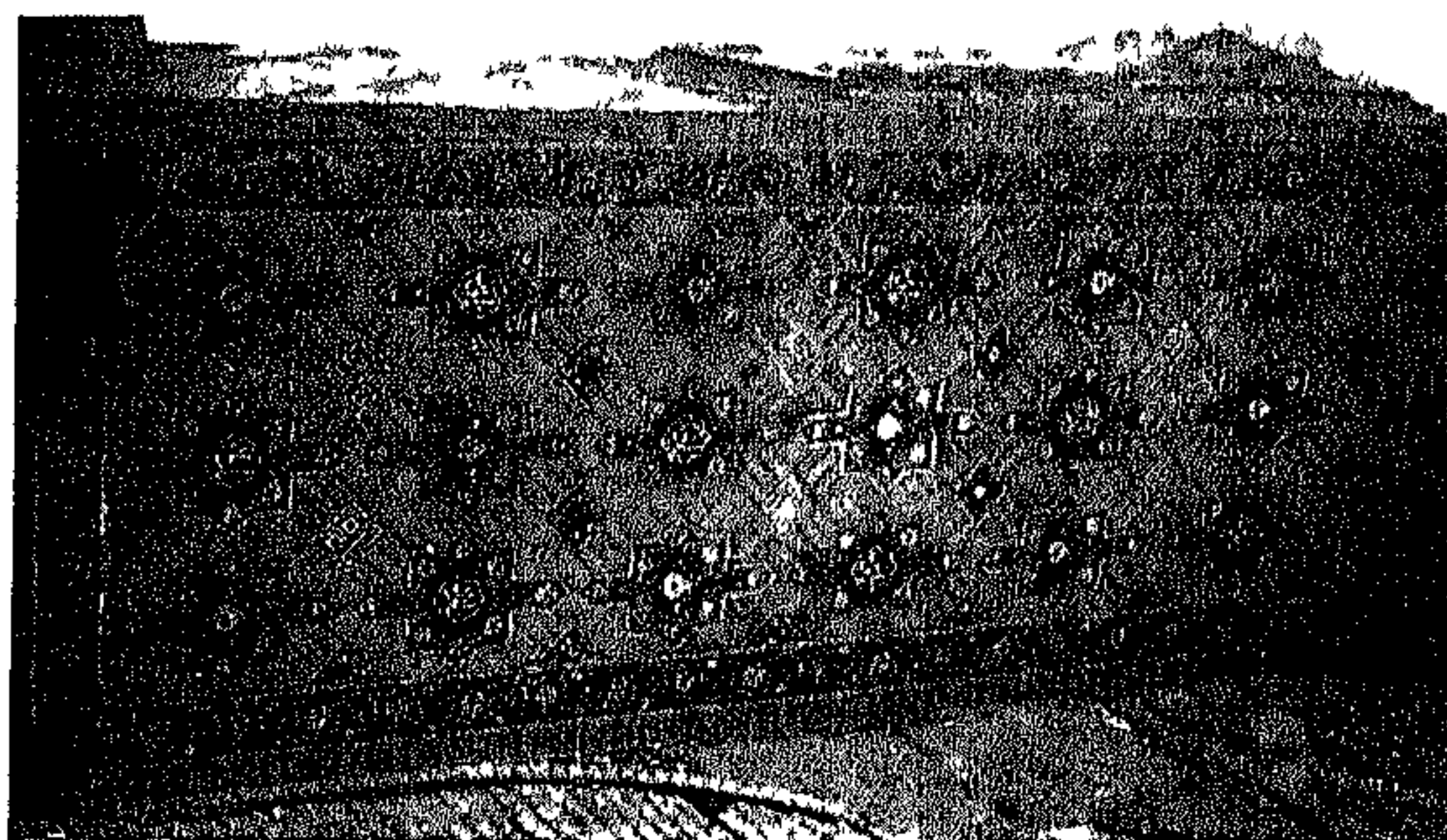
#### 6. *The Influence of Russia's Collapse on British Policy*

The Russian Revolutions of February and October, 1917, created for Great Britain in Persia and the Middle East an unparalleled opportunity to play a lone hand in the extension of its interests, where formerly it had been circumscribed by the necessity of effecting a compromise with competing Russian imperialist designs. At the same time events in Russia gave rise, in a new and acute form, to British apprehensions for the safety of India.

The first immediate reaction of Great Britain to the October Revolution, however, consequent upon the disintegration of Russian troops in Persia who had previously barred the way to the passage of Turkish and German forces to Great Britain's nerve center, India, had to do with the military protection of that country. Moreover, agitation for the establishment of a Persian Republic, provoked under the influence of events in Russia, proved no less disquieting. The spread of contagious Russian revolutionary doctrines to Persia and Afghanistan threatened to bring

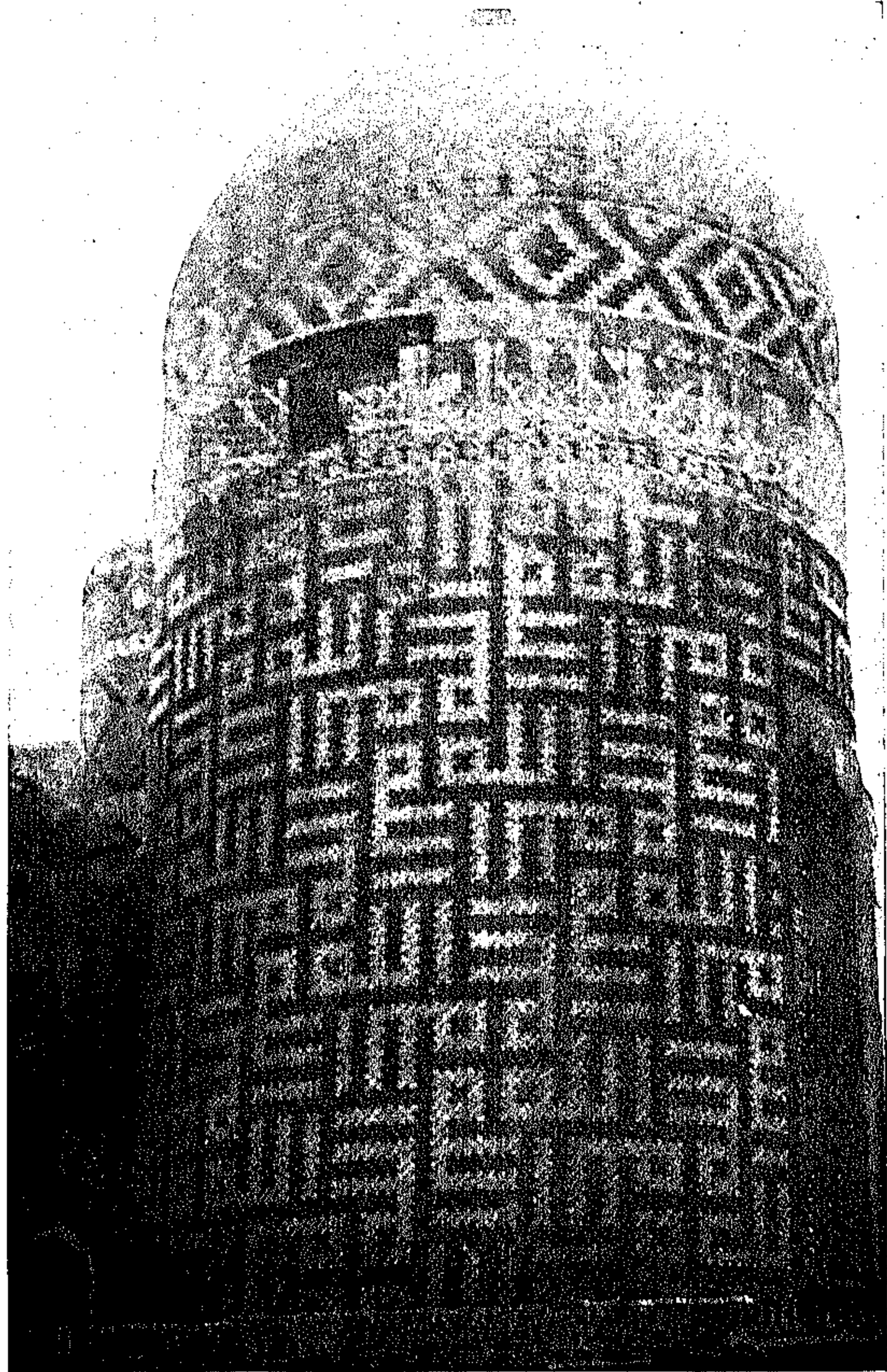


Entrance to shrine of Sheikh Sefi, Ardebil



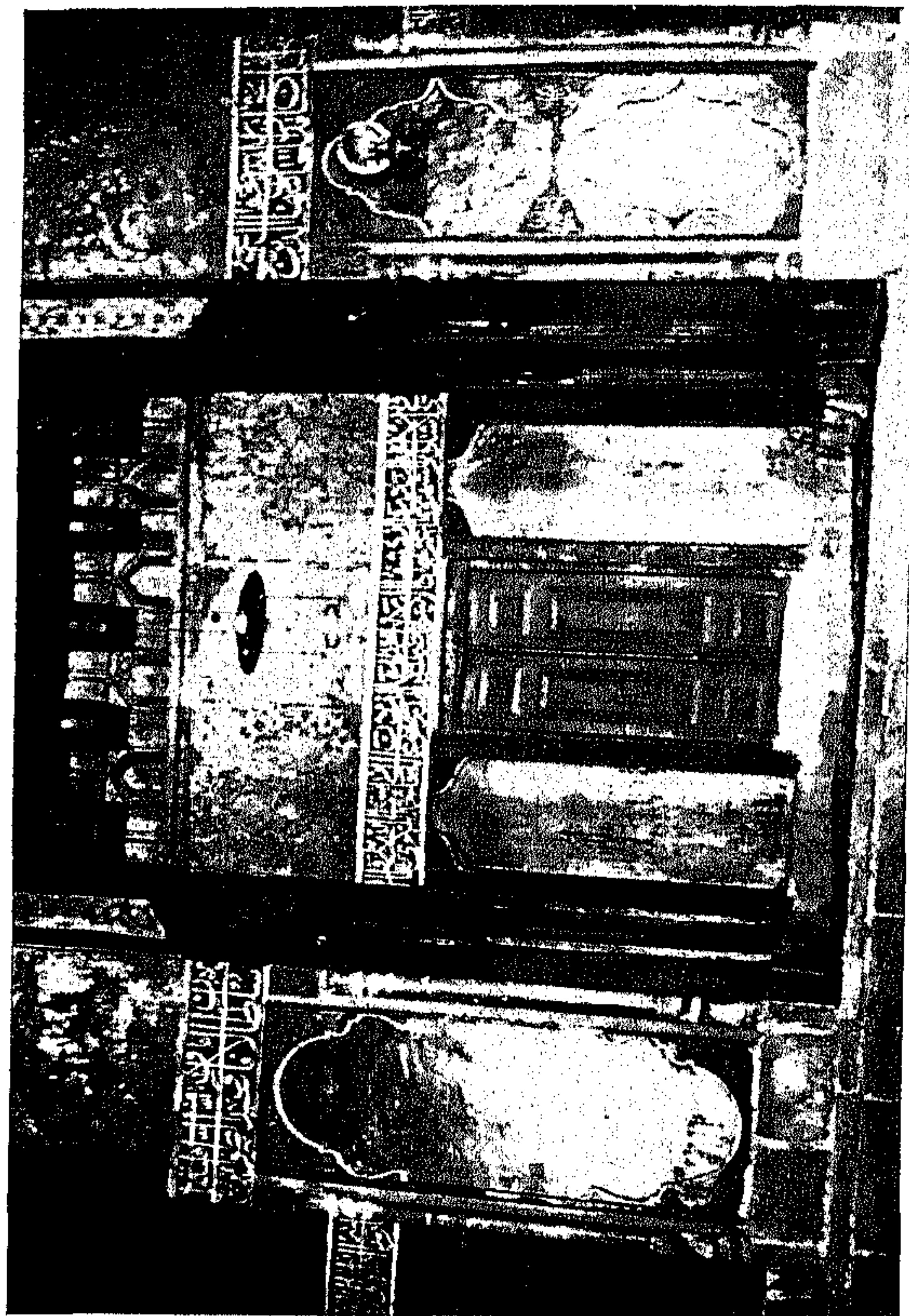
Tile design from the Blue Mosque, Tabriz



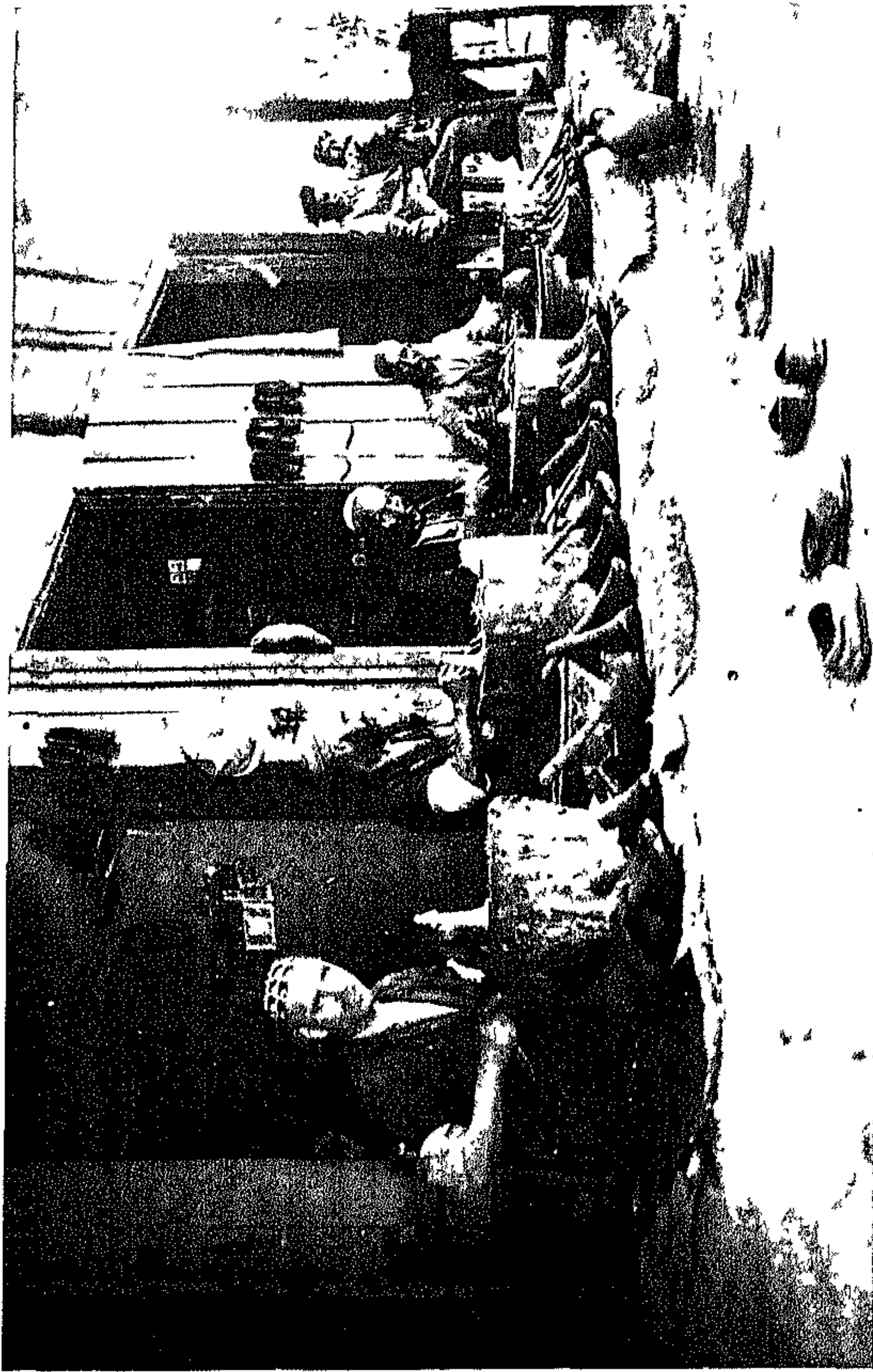


Tomb of Sheikh Sefi, Ardebil





Interior of shrine of Sheikh Sefi, Ardebil

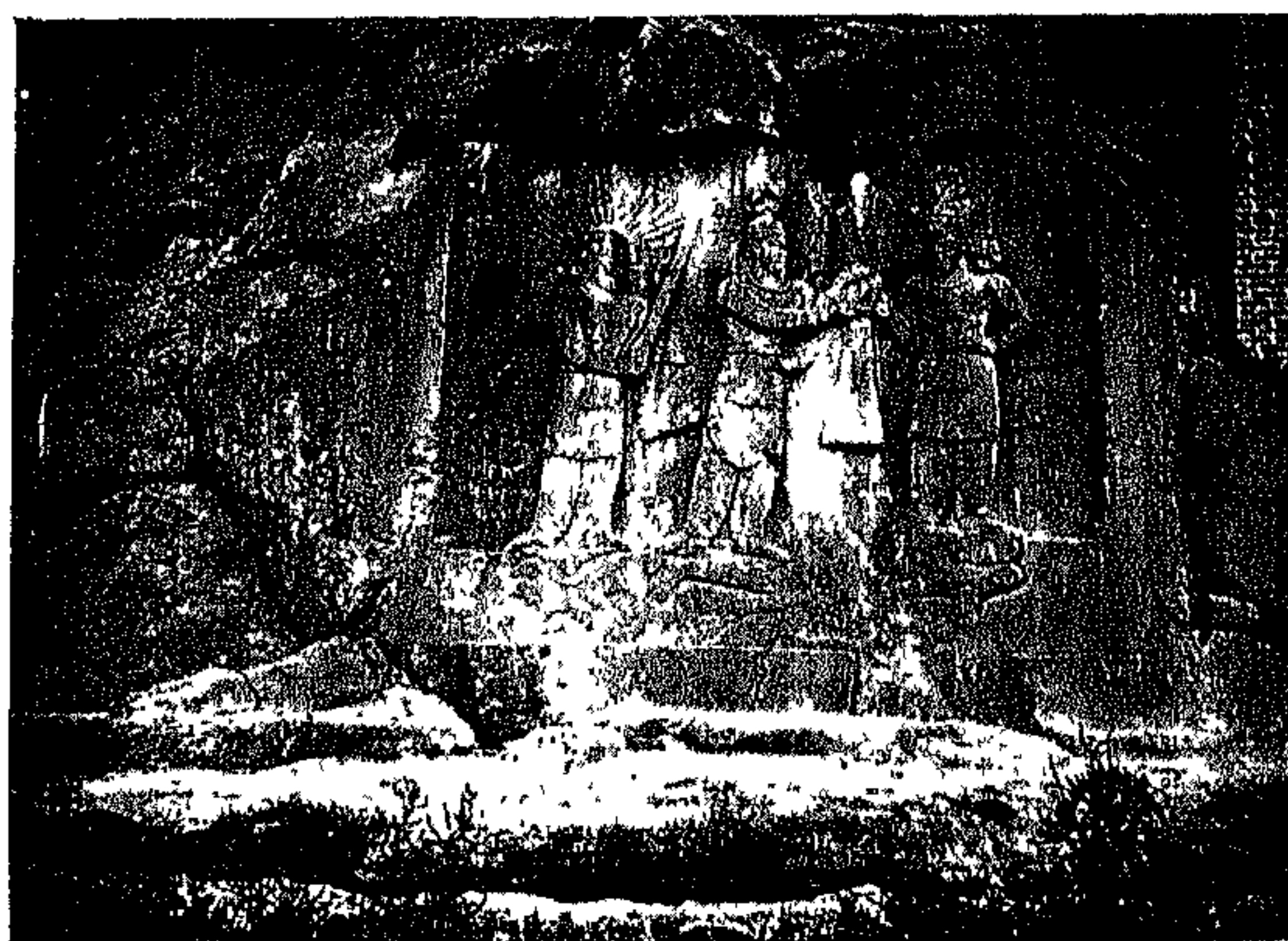


Shoemakers' Bazaar, Marand



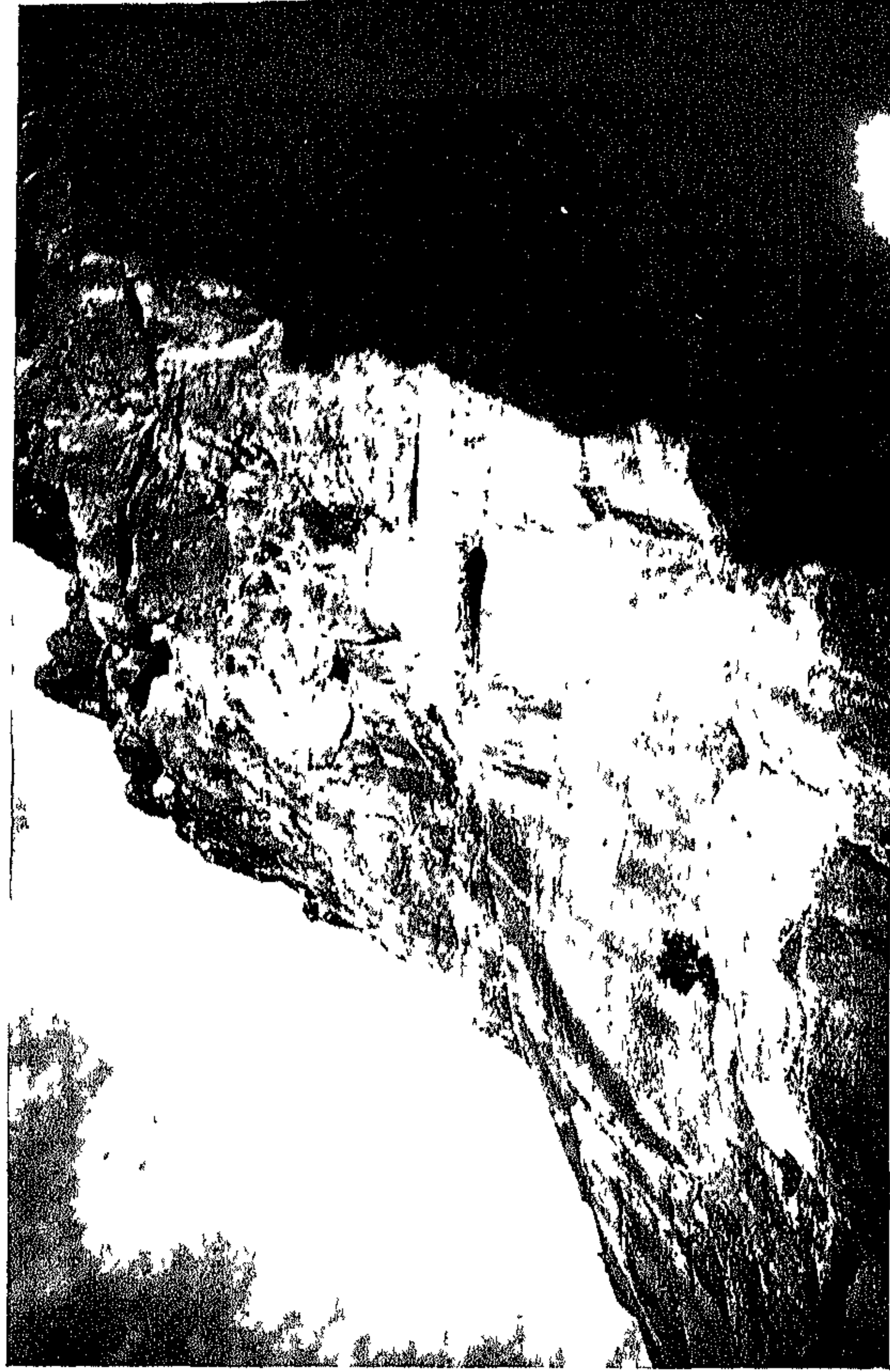
A camel caravan makes its way across the snow-covered Assadabad Pass





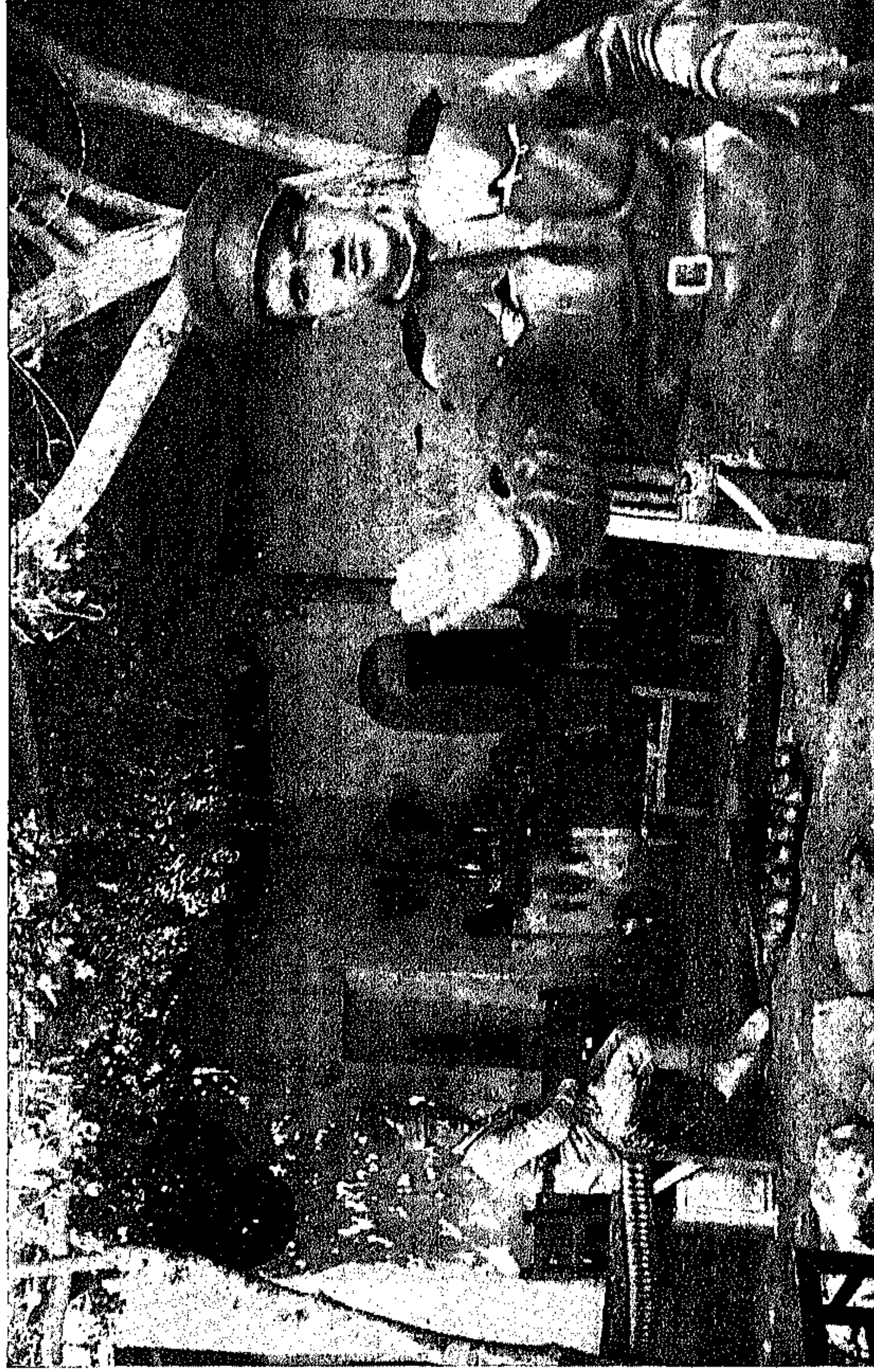
Sassanian sculptures, Tak-i-Bostan



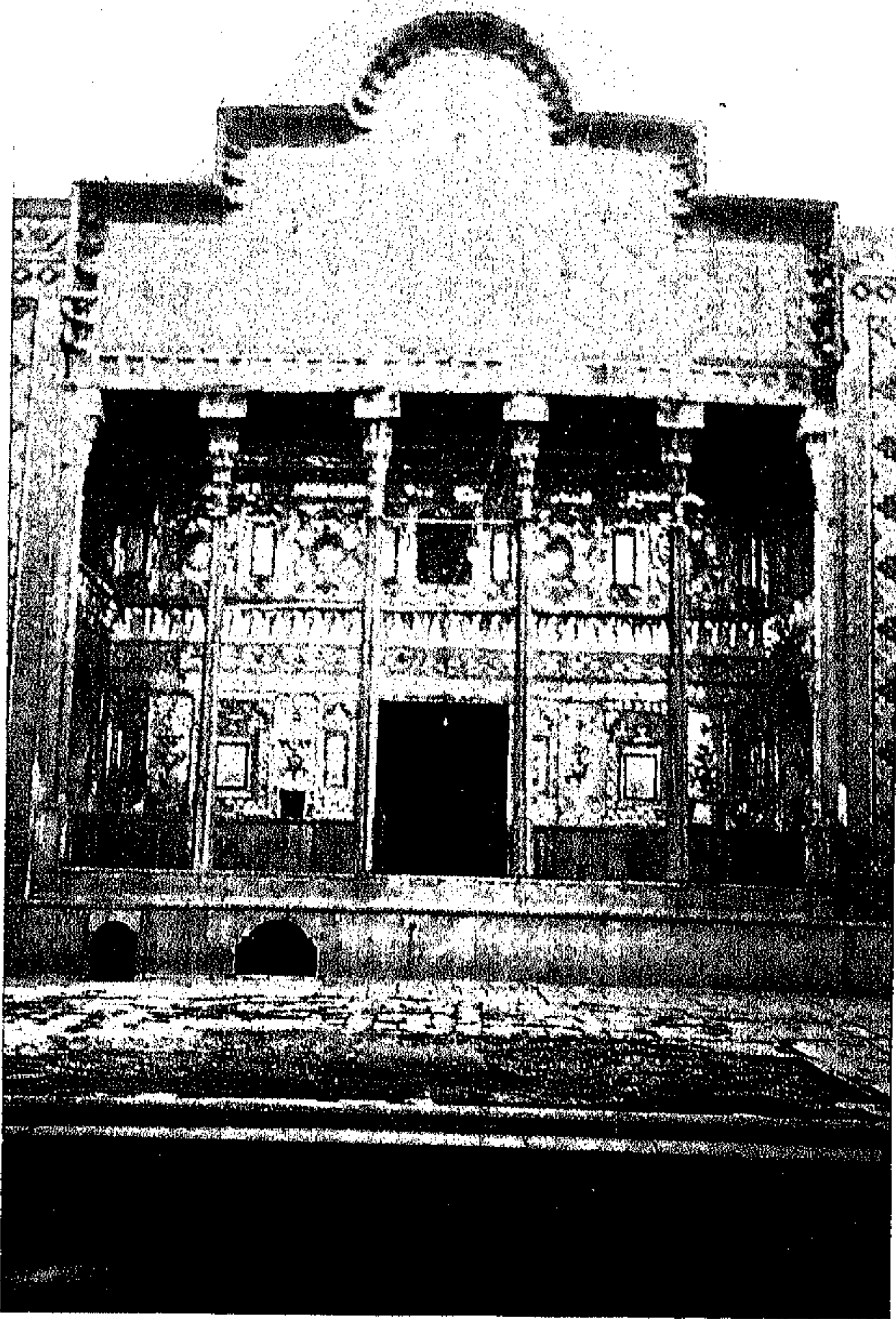


Bisitun rock sculpture and inscriptions of Darius the Great





Tea house (*Chai-khaneh*) near the Paytak Pass  
The Persian policeman is endeavoring to prevent the taking of the photograph



Holy of Holies of the Imamzadeh Hussein, Kazvin

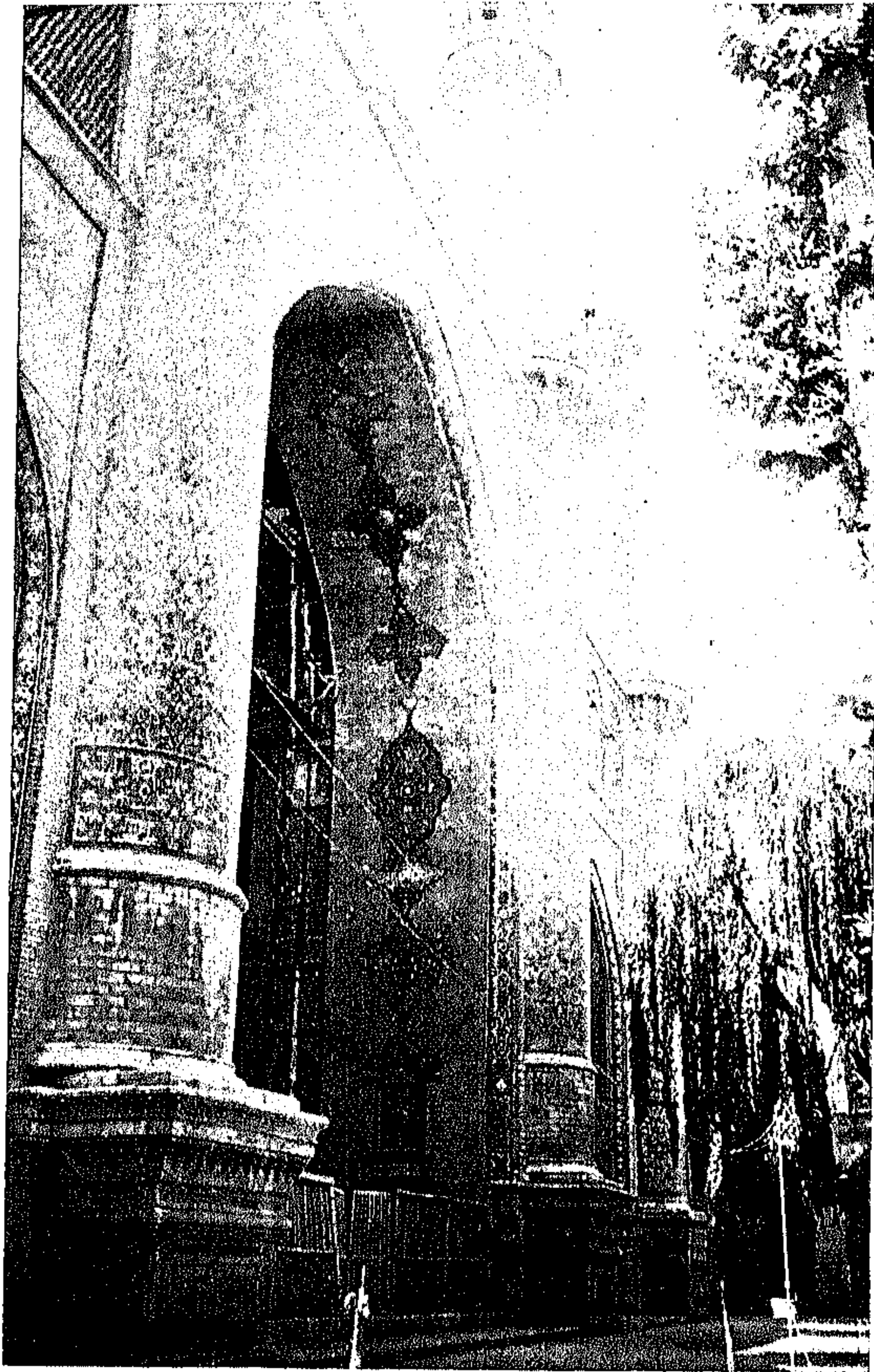
Before this resplendent mausoleum enclosing the tomb the foreigner must halt as no ingress in the inner shrine is permitted



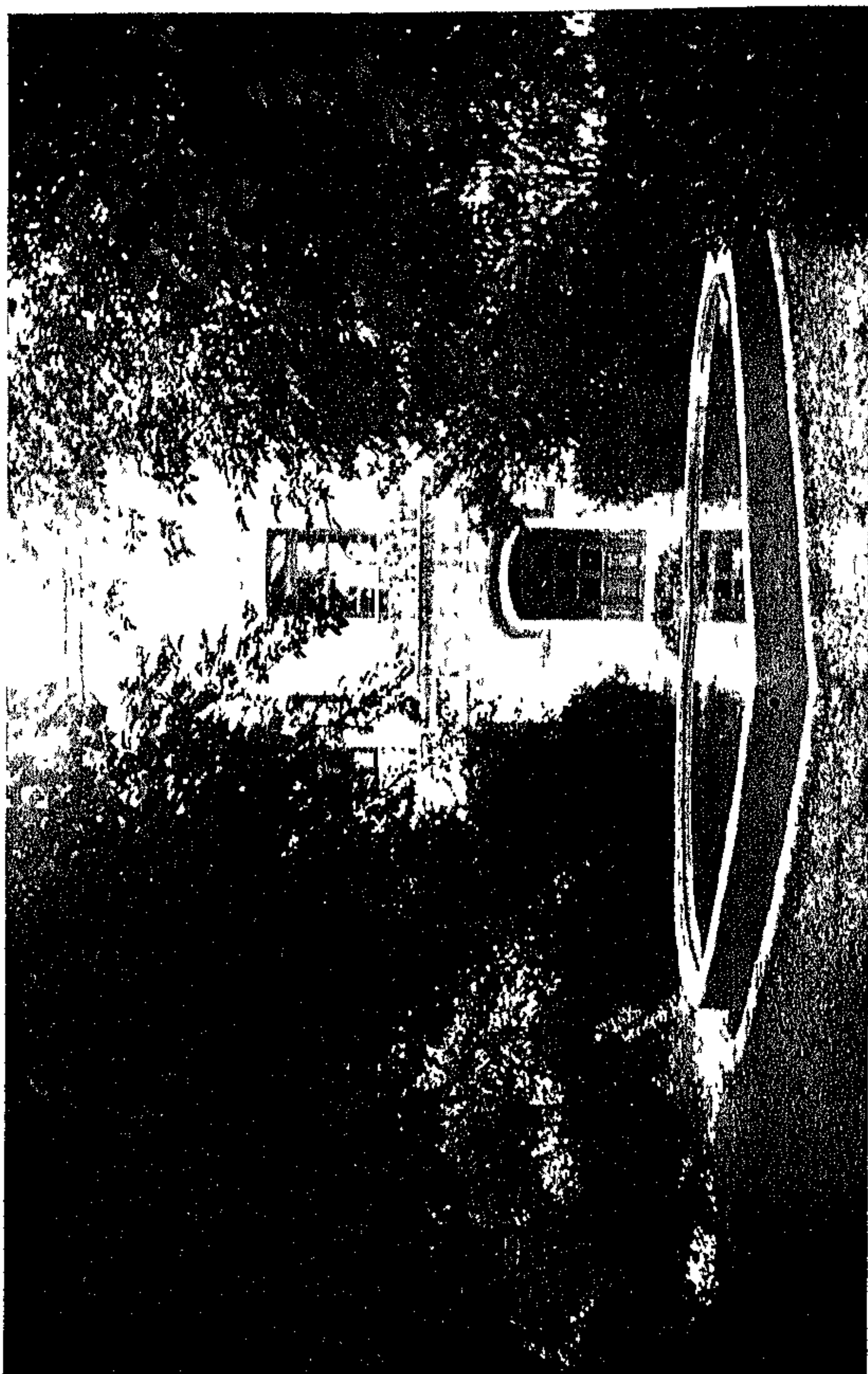


Camels and calico, Karaj

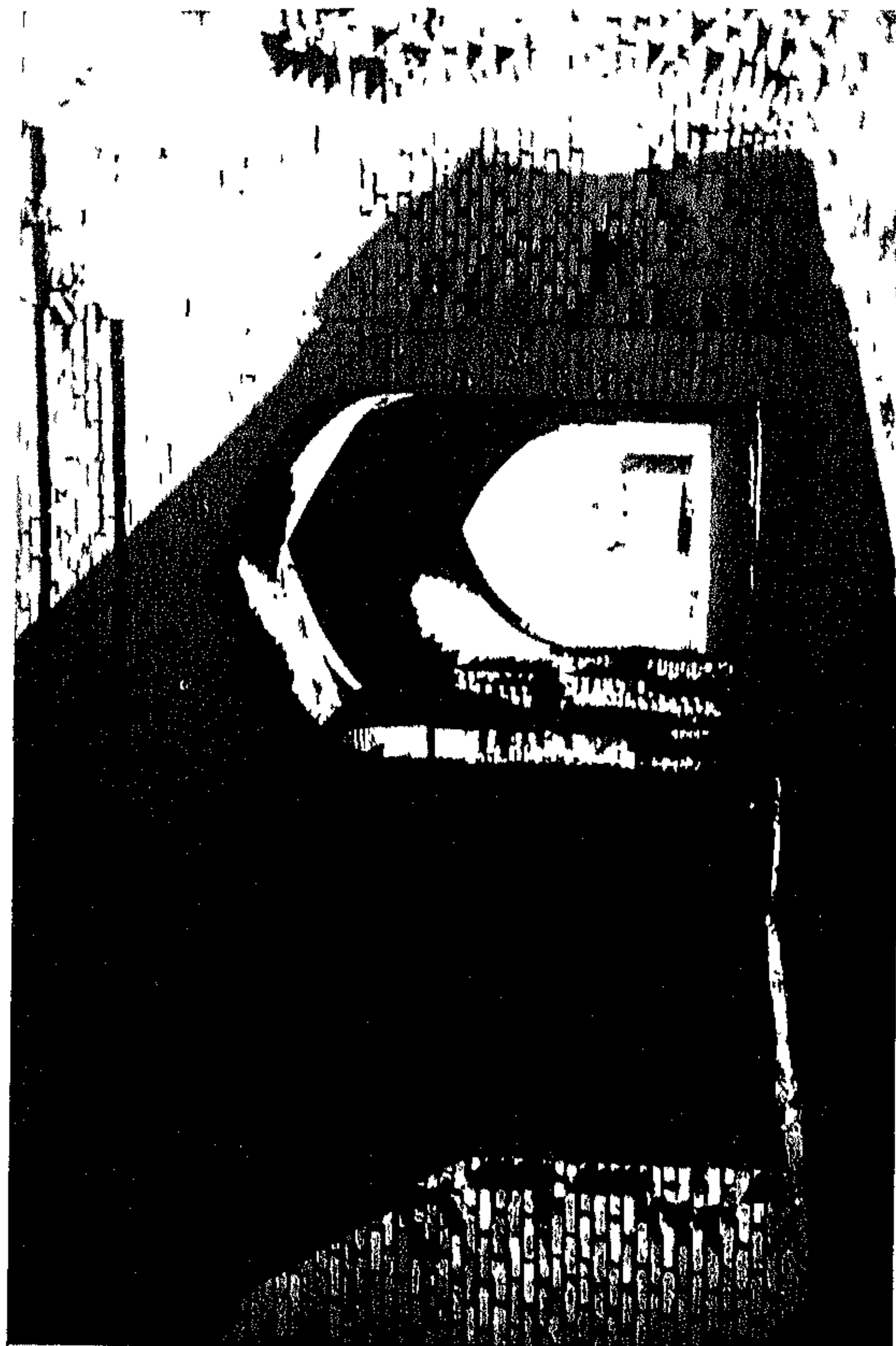




Mosque of Sepahsalar, Teheran

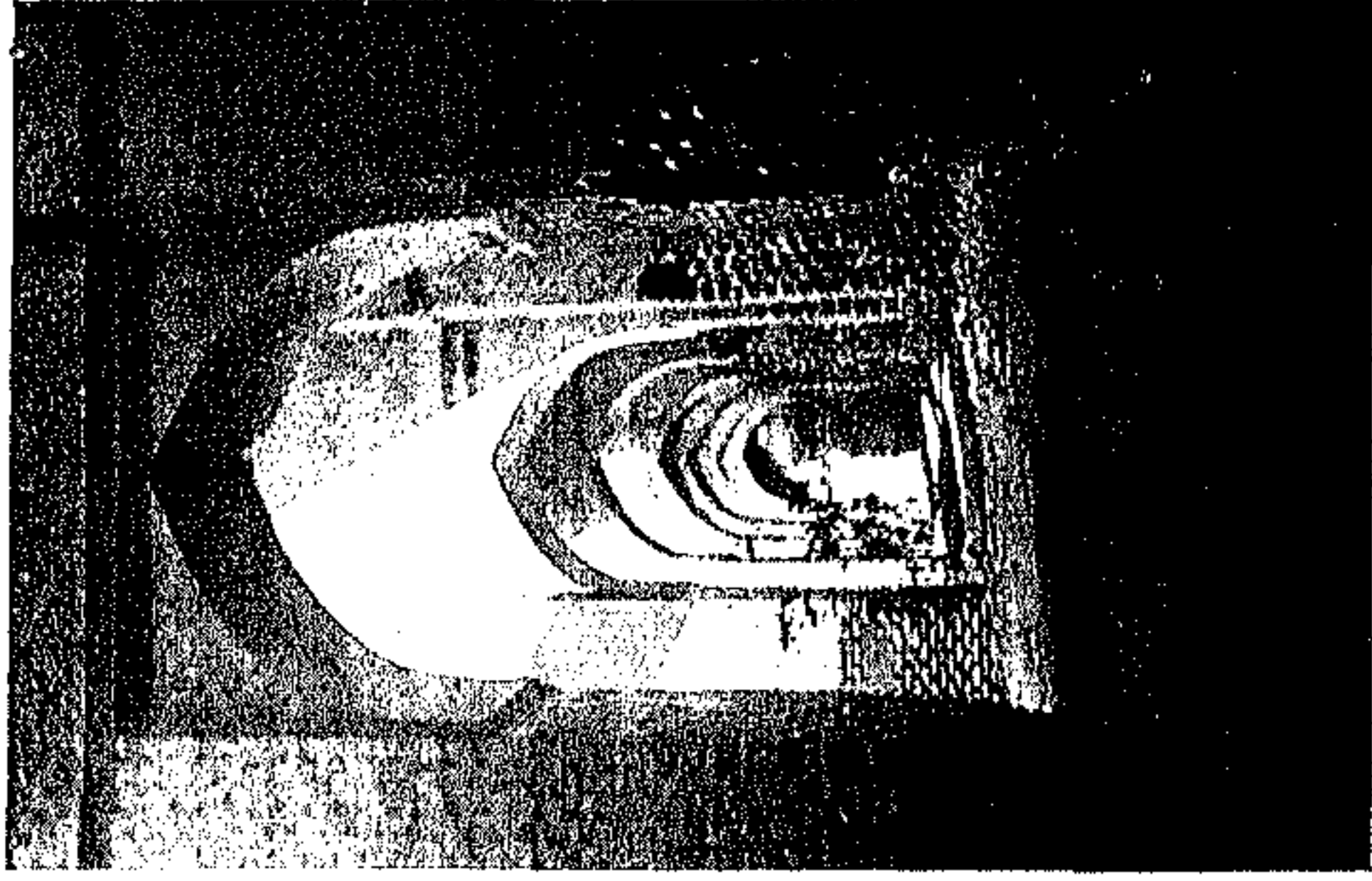


A Persian garden, Teheran

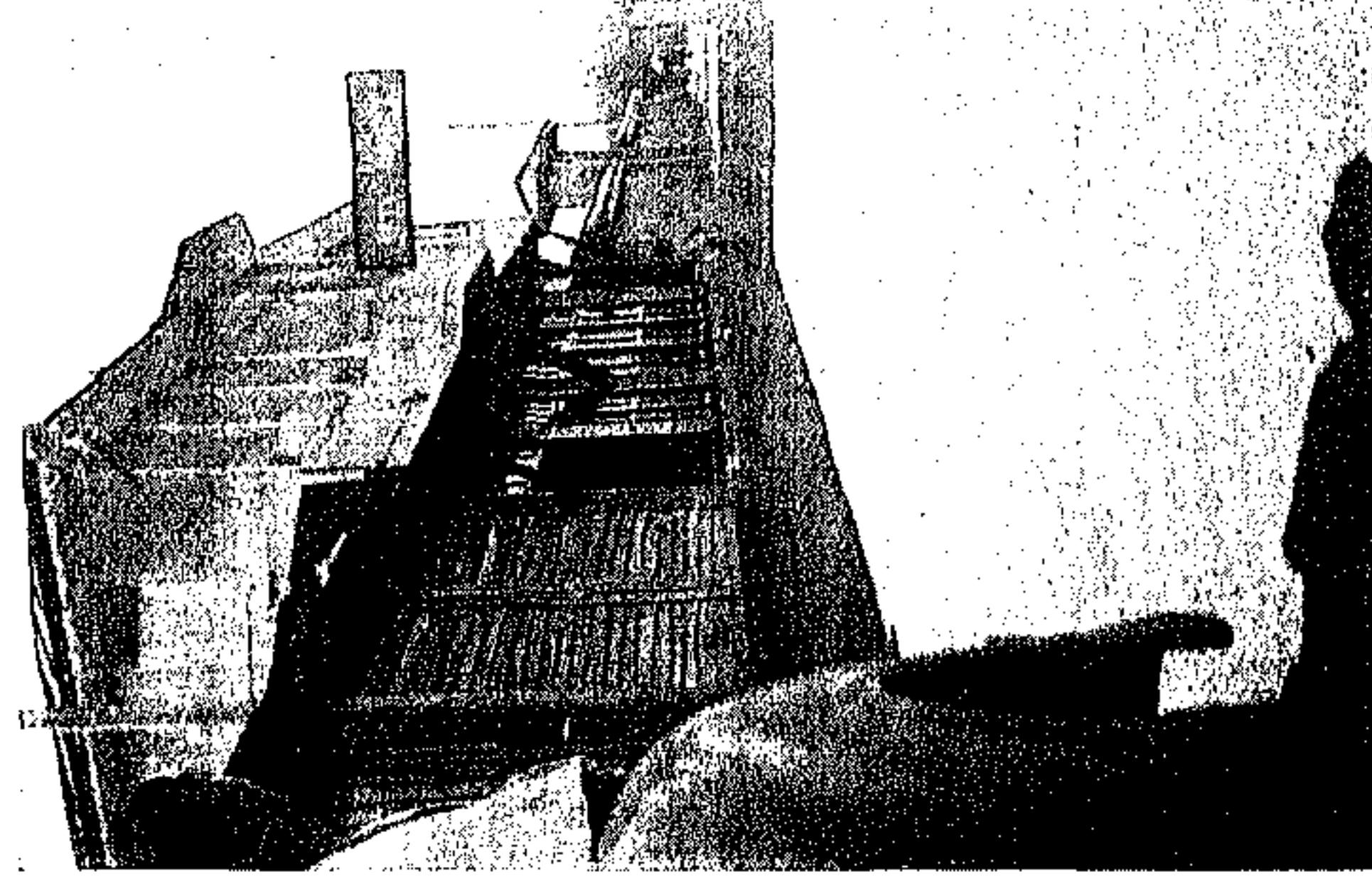


Inner court of the Seljuk mosque at Veramin. In the distance is a Seljuk tomb





Seljuk mosque at Veramin



Orient Hotel, Meshed-i-Sar





Mountain village of Pas-Kalch near Teheran



Caspian jungle



The carpet weaver makes a repair



By the Chalus road to the Caspian



Homes of the Mazanderanis





The Chalus road





Rice fields in a mountain valley on the Firouzkuh-Shahi road.  
Note the new Trans-Persian Railroad in the left foreground



*Wide World Photos, Inc.*

Pahlevi, the Shah of Persia, on the throne

to the threshold of India the dangerous doctrines of self-determination and national liberation, only too well calculated to subvert its seething restless millions.

Accordingly, beside the British troops in south Persia, independent troops were rushed into northwest Persia under Sir William Marshall and into northeast Persia under Sir Wilfred Malleson in 1918. General Dunsterville made a dash upon Baku through the Persian port of Enzeli, supported by Commodore Norris, of the British Navy. According to an account by General Dickson, who took part in these military operations in north Persia, Commodore Norris proceeded to take charge of the vessels of "the Russian Imperial Navy, and on behalf of General Denikin's anti-bolshevik government held command of the Caspian Sea." With the forces dispatched to the Caucasus, Great Britain thus maintained a cordon of troops extending from Batum on the Black Sea through the Caucasus to Baku and Enzeli on the Caspian, and thence eastward an unbroken line of communications to Meshed on the northeastern frontier of Persia and to Krasnovodsk and Merv in Russian Turkestan, touching the borders of Persia and Afghanistan.

At the same time, these operations became most effectively supported and extended by the decision taken by the Allied and Associated Powers as a unit in July, 1918, to intervene actively in Russia. Oddly enough, it was after this decision that the diplomatic representatives of the Allied Powers in Teheran saw fit, when protesting against the action of the Persian Government abrogating the old unequal treaties with Russia, to demand at the same time the resignation of the Persian Cabinet. Although the Shah at first refused, he was obliged in the end to yield. Thenceforth, with the installation of a new Persian Cabinet on August 7, 1918, under Vossugh-ed-Dowlah, and the introduction of martial law throughout the country, British control over Persia was effectively established. It was subsequently rendered complete by the Allied victory over the Central Powers and the armed encirclement of Soviet Russia.

7. *Curzon's Dream of the Supersession of Russian Influence  
by Great Britain*

Long before Lord Curzon assumed the direction of British foreign affairs, he had written in his monumental study of Persia :

Turkestan, Afghanistan, Transcaspia, Persia, to me . . . they are the pieces of a chessboard upon which is being played out a game for the dominion of the world. . . . The future of Great Britain . . . will be decided not in Europe . . . but in the continent whence our emigrant stock first came, and to which as conquerors their descendants have returned.

Nicolson, his biographer, adds that Curzon had always dreamt of creating for Great Britain a chain of vassal states stretching from the Mediterranean to the Pamirs, and "it seemed that in those early months of 1919 that this dream was about to be realized."

The same author reports that a meeting of the Eastern Committee of the British War Cabinet, presided over by Lord Curzon on December 30, 1918, debated the dilemma of justifying, with the defeat of Germany and Turkey and the convening of the Peace Conference, the maintenance on Persian territory of armed British detachments, which "could have no purpose other than the creation, in a neutral country, of a front against Red Russia." The general opinion favored the liquidation, as far as possible, of British commitments in the Middle East growing out of the war, in the face of that rising disillusionment which Lenin had anticipated would at length express itself against the aims and purposes of imperialism. Curzon opposed this view and obtained authority for the continued maintenance of a nucleus of forces in Persia. At the same time he gained the sanction of his colleagues for the negotiation of an agreement looking to the regularization of Great Britain's status in Persia as that country's special protector, along lines later to take the form of the famous Anglo-Persian Agreement of 1919. This imposed a virtual British protectorate over Persia.



With protectorates over Egypt and Persia, the assignment of Palestine, Transjordan and Iraq under mandates to Great Britain, and the severance of the Caucasus from Russia, Curzon's dream of a British Middle-Eastern Empire extending from the Mediterranean to India seemed, indeed, on the point of realization.

The Armistice, of course, had raised the hopes of Persians. They dared to believe, on the strength of the professed aims of the Allies toward weak nations—in the words of Lenin, "the oppressed peoples of the East"—that an opportunity might be offered at the Peace Conference for the establishment "of a strong independent state that will no longer be a pawn in the international game of the larger imperial powers."

In vain, however, Persia placed its faith in the application of the Wilsonian principles at Versailles. Its delegates waited, their hats in their hands, for admission to present their grievances and their peace aims. They were left standing in the vestibule of the Conference Chamber.

Quick to take advantage of this chance to discredit the Allies, the Soviet Government on June 26, 1919, commissioned its representative, Kolomietzieff, to deliver to the Persian Government a note expressing the willingness of the Soviet Government to conclude new treaties with Persia "on the principle of free accords and mutual respect of peoples." Moreover, in order to afford Persia adequate compensation for the damage caused by Russian troops during the war, the note pledged the annulment of all Persian debts to Russia, amounting to some twenty-two million dollars, the renunciation of the many valuable Russian concessions, the free gift to the Persian people of Russian property in Persia, and many like concessions, including the abolition of the capitulatory régime as far as Russia was concerned. The attempt of the Soviet Government to accord the treatment to a weak nation which had been among the professed aims of the Allied and Associated Powers during the war, was countered by the refusal of the censor to permit the Soviet offer to reach the Persian people through the press, and by the running of Kolo-

mietzieff out of Teheran and his pursuit and assassination at the hands of White Guards. Soon after, on August 9, 1919, came the signature of the Anglo-Persian Agreement, by which Persia was placed under the tutelage of Great Britain.

Publication of the terms of the Agreement unloosed a storm of indignation in Persia. There were not wanting Englishmen who regarded it and the manner of its execution with great misgivings. Lord Grey observed that "here was a case of helping a weak country where the League of Nations ought to have been brought into the matter." The Honorable J. M. Balfour, who had been appointed under its terms Assistant British Financial Adviser to Persia, was even brutal in his denunciation. Indeed, his book, *Recent Happenings in Persia*, published in 1922, made charges of so sensational a character regarding the means by which the Persian negotiators had been persuaded to append their signatures, that it was withdrawn from circulation and a number of passages deleted from the printed text before its general sale was permitted. •

#### 8. *The Checkmaking of Curzon's Policy*

In an effort to divert the rising tide of outraged public opinion, the newspaper, *Ra'd*, organ of the Cabinet, sought to place upon the United States the onus of Persia's plight. Persia, it was charged, had been deceived by Wilson's "good words." The Prime Minister, in a public statement, even asserted that the United States had "refused aid to Persia."

The fact was that the United States had sought unsuccessfully to bring Persia's case before the Peace Conference. The American Legation in Teheran was authorized by the State Department on September 4, 1919, to:

Deny to both Persian officials and anyone else interested that America has refused to aid Persia. You may also inform them that the United States has often showed its interest in the welfare of Persia and that the American Commission in Paris endeavored earnestly, several times, to

secure an audience at the Peace Conference for the Persian Commission, but the American Commission was surprised that it did not receive more support in this matter. However, the announcement of the recent Anglo-Persian treaty probably explains why such a hearing could not be obtained and it also appears that the Persian Government at Teheran did not give strong support to the efforts of the Commission. The American Government learned of the recent Anglo-Persian Agreement with surprise, for it seems to indicate that Persia does not desire American cooperation and aid in the future, even though the Persian delegates in Paris strongly and openly sought American support.

In a little known work published shortly after by a French professor in Teheran, Emile Lesueur, himself a spectator of the events described, it is stated that the American Minister in Teheran, Mr. Caldwell, protested against the base charges against the United States circulated by the press and:

as the newspapers of the capital refused to publish his protest and the formal denial of Mr. Lansing, he had printed, in the form of a pamphlet, the telegram addressed to him by the latter and for several days had it freely distributed in the streets of Teheran and in the bazaar.

The extraordinarily unconventional tone and manner of presentation of the American position heartened opposition to the Agreement and desires for the preservation of Persia's national integrity. For a time all possibility of ratification by the Majlis was imperiled.

While postponing the matter of its ratification, steps were taken, nevertheless, for the execution of the terms of the Agreement by the appointment to Teheran of British Military, Financial and Tariff Missions as advisers to the Persian Government.

Meanwhile, however, the military position of the Soviet Government was rapidly improving. Russia was being freed of the White armed forces. Yudenitch had collapsed in October, 1919. Kolchak's debacle followed shortly after. With the freeing of

south Russia from Denikin's forces, Baku was entered by the Red Army on April 27, 1920.

With the capture of Baku, the vessels constituting Denikin's Caspian Fleet fled to the Persian port of Enzeli pursued by a Red Fleet. The Reds issued a warning that, failing British evacuation of north Persia, which, it was alleged, had been used as a springboard for attacks on Russia, the Soviet forces would proceed to take such measures as might be necessary for the protection of their country.

On May 18, 1920, the Soviet Fleet appeared off Enzeli, which had been leased to Russia before the war. After notice to the Persian authorities, it proceeded to the bombardment of the Denikin Fleet and the supporting British positions on land. There followed a parley between the opposing Soviet and British forces and the retirement of the latter to Resht. In reply to the Persian protest to Moscow, the government was assured that the Soviet detachment would be withdrawn "as soon as military requirements permitted" (referring to the continued presence of British forces in north Persia) and as soon as it might be possible for the Soviet Government to obtain fulfillment of its previous offer of unhindered navigation on the Caspian Sea, alike by Persian and Soviet vessels, and of its offer to return to Persia the port appurtenances at Enzeli.

With the subsequent retirement of British troops to Kazvin, the Soviet forces proceeded to occupy Resht. There, on June 6, 1920, Persian Bolsheviks, under the protection of Soviet Russia's armed forces, proclaimed a Soviet Republic of Gilan.

In the face of these developments which coincided with a rising tide of labor unrest in England, and of the spirit of nationalism in Egypt, India, Iraq and Ireland, Lloyd George urged upon his cabinet colleagues, including Curzon, the necessity of liquidating British commitments in Persia and the Caucasus. Curzon successfully opposed Lloyd George in respect of the immediate evacuation of Persia, but was obliged to countenance the evacuation of Batum by the British which took place on July 7, 1920, as well as the initiation by Lloyd George, on May 31, 1920, of con-



versations with Krassin, the representative of the Soviet Government in London, looking to the conclusion of a trade agreement.

While these conversations were proceeding which eventually took form in the Anglo-Russian Trade Agreement of March 16, 1921, Lord Curzon was making one final effort to salvage his policy in Persia. It was launched by a speech in the House of Lords on November 16, 1920, in which, in the course of a spirited defense of his Persian policy, he hinted that Persia would be abandoned to its fate if the Anglo-Persian Agreement was not accepted by Persia.

This speech was followed by announcements that British troops would be withdrawn in the spring from north Persia, and that all British enterprises there would be liquidated, the Imperial Bank of Persia going so far as to request the withdrawal of funds by depositors.

Instead of becoming terror-stricken at the prospect of the sovietization of north Persia with the threatened withdrawal of the British, the Persian Government, on the contrary, calmly decided to stake its fate in a test of the good faith of the Soviet Government. Accordingly, there was conveyed, in connection with the negotiations already entered into with the Soviet authorities for the withdrawal of Soviet forces from north Persia, the readiness of the Persian Government at last to accept the offers repeatedly made to it by Moscow to conclude a treaty renouncing the old predatory policy of Tsarist Russia. A Persian representative was forthwith deputed to proceed to Moscow to negotiate the terms in which the various Soviet pledges might be embodied.

#### *9. The Historical Answers to Lenin's Theses*

In the face of the intransigence shown by Persia toward British efforts to reach a working Anglo-Persian accord, and in the belief that the Soviet Government would refuse to relinquish its hold on northern Persia, consideration would appear to have been given for a time by the British authorities to the safeguarding of

its interests in the south under a Southern Persian Confederation.

According to a letter which was later published, Captain E. Noel, an Indian intelligence officer, was sent to Persia by the British Foreign Office in January, 1921, "when it looked as if the withdrawal of our troops would be followed by a Bolshevik armed incursion and the establishment of a Soviet which would free our hands to take action in the South." But, instead of advancing, the Bolsheviks had retired, their policy, he noted, being "to hold Persia together and to prevent at all costs our starting a Southern Confederation."

According to the account given by Professor Lesueur, the English thereupon "decided to make a master stroke and to install in power in Teheran new men, who would be devoted utterly to them and who would accept their tutelage."

In any case, as a result of the *coup d'état* organized by troops from Kazvin who entered Teheran on the evening of February 21, 1921, a new Prime Minister, Zia-ed-Din, was placed in office, with the assistance of Colonel Reza Khan, who was himself appointed at once as Commander of the Army.

Professor Lesueur notes that:

The English pretended naturally to have had nothing to do with the plot; they admit, however, that the night before they negotiated with the insurgents the dragoman of their Legation, Mr. Smart, went to them in an automobile; in the name of the sovereign he distributed five tomans to each soldier to withdraw these undesirables from the capital; was this indeed the purpose of his intervention?

Whatever the foreign support which may or may not have been accorded the *coup d'état*, the leaders thereof were not slow to assert their independence.

Five days later a Soviet-Persian Treaty was signed in Moscow, and in another one hundred days Colonel Reza Khan, who had succeeded to the duties of Minister of War in addition to those of Commander of the Army, showed himself the true master of events by forcing the resignation of the Prime Minister. In the

new Cabinet formed in May, 1921, Reza Khan remained in office in his double capacity and so continued, as Cabinets came and went, until by successive stages he succeeded to the office of Prime Minister and later to that of Shah-in-Shah.

Although not apparent at the time, the Soviet-Persian Treaty of February 26, 1921, marked the end of the application of the principles of militant communism in Persia and the Middle East.

And, although it was no less difficult of appreciation at the time, there was something more than a fortuitous coincidence between this conclusion of militant communism and the entrance into public life of Reza Khan, regenerator of the Persian nation.

Reza Khan in Persia, Kemal Pasha in Turkey, Amanullah Khan in Afghanistan, Sun Yat Sen in China—these were not precisely the answers which Lenin had expected history to give to his theses when he contemplated an imminent world revolution. But they were sufficiently conclusive in character to challenge the dominance of imperialism in those countries and they justified the appositeness of one at least of Lenin's affirmations: that "revolutions are not made to order."

#### *10. The Application of Soviet Eastern Policy in Persia*

The Soviet-Persian Treaty of February 26, 1921, termed by Sir Percy Sykes, an historian of Persia, "a remarkable document," and by others "a notable charter of Persian liberties," marked a milestone in the emancipation of Persia.

Representing the general fulfillment of the promises made by Lenin even before the assumption of power, the Treaty solemnly renounced "the policy of force with regard to Persia pursued by the Imperialist Governments of Russia," branding, moreover, "as criminal that policy which, in the absence of the agreement of the peoples of Asia, concluded with other States treaties concerning the East" which had as their ultimate object its gradual seizure.

In announcing its refusal to "take part in any measures whatsoever tending to weaken or violate the sovereignty of Persia," the Soviet Government declared all treaties concluded by Tsarist

Russia with third Powers concerning Persia completely null and void. The Caspian Sea, over which Russia had previously exercised exclusive control, was declared a joint Russo-Persian Sea. All Persian obligations to Russia in the form of loans and concessions were renounced. In return the Persian Government pledged itself to regulate the Caspian Fisheries in the joint interests of the two countries; in a more important provision, Persia accorded to Russia the right, under strict limitations, of introducing Russian troops into Persia in the event "there should be attempts by means of armed intervention to realize a rapacious policy on the territory of Persia" or to turn the territory of Persia into a base for military action against Russia on the part of third Powers. Russia was thus safeguarding itself against a repetition of the events of 1917-20 when Persia had been used as a springboard for attacks against it.

Although the conclusion of peaceful treaty relations with the East, and subsequently with the West, represented a recognition of the failure of Bolshevism to bring about the revolt of the Western proletariat, the Soviet Government had, nevertheless, accomplished a signal and commonly ignored victory in its complementary aim of awakening "the oppressed peoples of the East" against Western imperialism. If, in the achievement of that aim, Western imperialism was not overthrown, it was, however, dealt successive blows in the emancipation of Persia, Turkey and Afghanistan, and in the stirring up of China, India and Indo-China. These blows necessitated the adoption of defensive measures in the watering down and adaptation of old predatory policies. And if the sovietization of the East has not proceeded beyond a few provinces in China, Leninism has undermined the pillars of the old imperialism as no other single force in modern times.

### *11. Rising Soviet Influence in the Middle East*

Beside the new charters of liberty embodied by the Soviet Union in the treaties concluded in 1921 with Persia, Turkey and Afghanistan, the Soviet Government undertook in the same year



to bind those countries closer together for mutual protection against the West in a series of bilateral accords which were concluded successively under Moscow's inspiration.

As Professor Toynbee has remarked, it was not unnatural, in the light of the old diplomacy pursued by the Allies in the Middle East immediately after the war, that those countries should turn for support to Soviet Russia, which had assumed "the rôle of an enlightened and disinterested champion of Turkish, Persian and Afghan liberties at a moment when a new political self-consciousness was arising in Turkish, Persian and Afghan minds." Lenin had foreseen this development, and the Soviet Government was now reaping the fruits of the policy which he had elaborated.

So realistic an observer of the international scene as Lloyd George, then British Prime Minister, was not slow to appreciate the necessity of the conclusion of a *modus vivendi* with the Soviet Government, and of adapting British policy in Persia to the changed circumstances.

To Soviet Russia the Anglo-Russian Trade Agreement of March 16, 1921, once account had been taken of the recession of the world revolutionary movement in the West, offered the advantage of strengthening its position by the *de facto* recognition accorded by a Great Power, and the promise which it held out of assistance in the building up of Soviet economy by the world's greatest trading nation. To Great Britain, worn out by the war and suffering from territorial indigestion, the supreme *quid pro quo* of the Treaty was the renunciation by Soviet Russia of hostile propaganda in Asia.

In further recognition of the changes which had come in Persia, the British Advisers, who had been sent out to Persia in anticipation of the application of the Anglo-Persian Agreement of 1919, now quietly took their departure in the autumn of 1921. The Teheran correspondent of the *London Times*, in a telegram of May 16, 1921, pertinently sounded the warning of the changed Anglo-Russian relationship to Persia. He observed that "British interests can be maintained here, but not by the old methods, nor by entire reliance on conveniently worded documents purchased

from financially embarrassed monarchs or politicians as in the past."

12. *Persia from the Perspective of Bolshevik Doctrine*

Since 1921 the policy of the Soviet Union has proceeded on the assumption that Persia offers no prospect of embracing the principles of communism either in the immediate or in the near future. The Soviet aim since 1921 has been, and it continues now to be, to insure the development of a strong central Persian Government capable of withstanding the pressure of influence for the use of Persia to promote Western aims and interests. Russian Bolsheviks recognize that a nation such as Persia has yet to pass through its bourgeois revolution before a social revolution may be envisaged. For the time being, they are content to do their utmost to promote the progress of Persia in throwing off the remnants of feudalism which hamper its march toward the establishment of a vigorous central government. Such were the tactics of Borodin in China where the Bolsheviks applied the lesson acquired earlier in Persia.

However, if Moscow, from 1921 onward, permitted the aim of World Revolution (so far as concerned the arousing of the Western proletariat) to recede farther and farther into the background of its calculations, this did not affect Soviet Russia's preoccupation with the weakening of Western imperialism through the awakening of the national consciousness of "the oppressed peoples of the East." Thenceforth, however, this preoccupation was expressed, at least in Persia, primarily in the application of Soviet economic policies.

Accordingly, it is not surprising that, from 1921 to 1926, while direct political action in Persia and the Middle East was generally less and less manifested by the Soviet Union, it continued to draw a sharp distinction in its economic relations between the West and the East. After 1921 economic rather than political factors take larger and larger form in Soviet-Persian relations. While the political factors were never lost sight of, they became more and more subordinated to the economic. After 1926, with the victory

of Stalin's policy of "socialism in a single country" over Trotsky's thesis of "permanent revolution," such a development became increasingly pronounced.

Meanwhile, the convening of the Persian Majlis on June 22, 1921, after some years of enforced inactivity, proved symbolic of the progressive release of Persia from foreign influence and dictation. Other notable events evidencing the rising strength of the national will were the disbanding of the South Persian Rifles, which had been organized by the British during the war; the termination of the services of British and Swedish officers generally; the building up by Reza Khan of the first uniform body of armed forces which the Persian Government had possessed in many years; and the extension, as this force developed in strength and coherence, of the authority of the central government over the semi-independent tribes. Indian troops which had been maintained by the British in southeast Persia were withdrawn in 1924. And Great Britain made no move to assert its protection in favor of the semi-independent tribal chieftains, such as the Sheikh of Mohammerah and others in the south, who had long been British protégés, when the Persian Government undertook to break the independent authority they formerly asserted.

To an American journalist, Vincent Sheean, the British Minister described in 1926 the new trend in British policy in Persia as one of "benevolent inaction." British policy, he added, had consistently been directed toward the strengthening and preservation of the Persian State, "a barrier between India and Russia." Great Britain, it was said, had previously pursued three different methods in the attainment of this end: the first, in antagonism to Russia until 1907; the second, in co-operation with that Power from 1907 to 1917; and the third, in direct assistance offered the Persian Government in the Anglo-Persian Agreement of 1919. The fourth method, that of "benevolent inaction," was described as "the last choice left."

To this period of "benevolent inaction" belongs the elevation of Reza Khan to the premiership in 1923 and his ascension of the Peacock Throne in 1926.

13. *The Reaction of Stalin's Thesis of "Socialism in a Single Country" on Persia*

The emphasis placed by the Soviet Union on its Eastern policy and its preoccupation, even after the notion of world revolution had been relegated to the background, with the cementing of special ties with the East, were particularly manifested in the distinction drawn until 1926, and even as late as 1930, between foreign trade with the East and that with the West.

Until 1926 Persia, in common with other Eastern countries, was exempted from the strict application of the Soviet foreign trade monopoly.

On the death of Lenin in 1924, a bitter internal struggle developed within the Communist Party between Stalin, on the one hand, seeking the adoption by the Party of the application of the thesis of "socialism in a single country," and Trotsky, on the other, protagonist of the theory of "permanent revolution," who held that socialism might be attained in Russia only by the aid of revolution in other countries.

The collapse of the revolutionary situation in Germany in 1923, the return of the Conservative Government to power in England in 1924, and the events leading up to Locarno, which were interpreted by the Bolsheviks as an effort to effect the encirclement and isolation of Russia by the withdrawal of Germany from an Eastern to a Western orbit, these were all factors which may be presumed to have influenced Stalin's recognition of the "temporary stabilization of capitalism" and the stress he placed on the necessity for the consolidation of Soviet gains at home.

The eventual victory of Stalin over Trotsky was manifested soon after, both in domestic and foreign policy, and had, in turn, an important and immediate influence on Anglo-Soviet relations with Persia.

In the Soviet Union the consequences of the adoption of Stalin's thesis of "socialism in a single country" were expressed in the ambitious plans for the industrialization of the country. These soon assumed concrete form in the Five Year Plan, and in the



increasing absorption of the Soviet Government in the maintenance of peace.

As a counter-move against Locarno, the Soviet Government proceeded, steadily after 1925, to negotiate with its neighbors a network of treaties of neutrality and non-aggression, in order to insure the possibility of the peaceful construction of socialism within the U. S. S. R. These included negotiations not only with the Baltic States, Poland and Finland, but with its eastern neighbors, too.

There were even rumors for a time of the possible establishment of an eastern league of nations, uniting the Soviet Union, Turkey, Persia and Afghanistan (of which countries only one, Persia, was at that time a member of the League at Geneva) as a counterpoise to Geneva and Locarno. In any case, steps were taken looking to the cementing of the ties binding those four countries together. In late 1925 a Soviet-Turkish treaty of neutrality was concluded, followed in 1926 by like treaties between Persia and Turkey,\* and between the U. S. S. R. and Afghanistan.

*With the severance of Anglo-Russian relations in May, 1927, following the raid on the London headquarters of the Soviet Trade Delegation, the Soviet Union redoubled its efforts to consolidate its position in the Middle East,—in that part of the world denominated by Stalin as "imperialism's rear."*

These efforts, in the case of Persia, were powerfully supported by its desire to stabilize most particularly its economic relations with the U. S. S. R. These had been seriously disturbed by the drastic restrictions which had been introduced early in 1926 in the Soviet Union's trade with Eastern countries, including Persia, proceeding out of the need of girding the entire economic strength of the country for the approaching embodiment of industrialization in the Five Year Plan.

With the series of five pacts concluded between the Soviet Union and Persia on October 1, 1927, at Moscow, not only were these relations regularized but the seal was placed on Persian sovereignty. The pacts included an agreement on the Caspian Fisheries, an agreement regulating the return of the appurtenances

of the port of Pahlevi to Persia, a commercial agreement, a tariff agreement and, finally, a pact of neutrality. Principal significance was attached by the Soviet Government to the security pact. It forged a new link in the chain that included similar pacts made with Turkey and Afghanistan the year before. Together they assured the Soviet Union of peace with its Middle-Eastern neighbors, while at the same time they precluded the use of those countries for the political encirclement and diplomatic isolation of the U. S. S. R.

Remarking on the already powerful impetus given the national-liberationist struggle in Persia by the October Revolution and the Soviet-Persian Treaty of 1921, the Moscow *Izvestia*, in hailing the pacts, exulted that "Persia is no longer the old Persia on whose territory were roving foreign troops and diplomats." Instead, it observed, the policy of the Soviet Government had always been to afford Persia assistance in the struggle for "complete emancipation from contaminating imperialistic influences." It added that consideration for the sovereignty of the Eastern States and non-interference in their domestic affairs were, for the Soviet Union, not mere beautiful slogans but genuine factors, forming the basis of relations.

#### 14. Conclusion

The pacts of 1927 between the Soviet Union and Persia were followed by a Perso-Afghan security pact in 1928. This completed the new chain of accords binding more closely the Middle-Eastern States with one another and with the Soviet Union.

The Middle-Eastern understanding, under the benevolent ægis of Moscow, was greatly furthered by the European and Asiatic tour of Amanullah, King of Afghanistan, in 1927 and 1928. In visits to Moscow, Ankara and Teheran he sought to cement this understanding. But his efforts were rudely upset by the rebellion of the Afghan tribes against his authority soon after his return home, which finally resulted in his deposition.

As may now be seen retrospectively, the years 1921 to 1926 represented the high-water mark of Soviet political influence in

the Middle East. The degree of influence, of course, varied in point of time with each country. It began to recede in Afghanistan only after 1928, somewhat earlier in Persia. Soviet relations with Turkey, however, have remained consistently stronger than with either of the other two Middle-Eastern countries.

In the case of Persia, Soviet aid in the early days after the World War was welcomed not by reason of any predilection for Soviet doctrine but as a counterpoise to Great Britain. As the U. S. S. R. has developed in strength and influence and, in these last years, has made its economic power felt with particular force in northern Persia where, before the war, both the political and economic might of Tsarist Russia was exercised without restraint, Persia has felt less and less inclined to lean on Moscow. With the industrialization of the Soviet Union, Persia has rightly sensed that Russia's foreign political and economic policies were destined to become more and more an expression of Soviet internal development, and destined to be less concerned, as they were in the early days of the Revolution, with direct assistance to the "oppressed peoples of the East" as a means of embarrassing Western imperialism. Not only has the need for such aid diminished with the passage of time, but the self-limiting principles of Stalin's thesis of "socialism in a single country" have contributed to distract the Soviet Union's concern from the East to its own great problems.

With this increasing preoccupation in internal development, it was but natural that the centripetal tendencies originally set in motion by the Soviet Union among the States of the Middle East should have been employed by the countries concerned to promote a closer understanding among themselves, once the forces of imperialism which had formerly shaped their destinies had undergone radical modification. A common Moslem religion; in the case of Persia and Afghanistan, a common language; a common culture; and, of major importance, a common struggle toward emancipation, political, material and ideological, have served to promote bonds of common accord between Persia, Turkey and Afghanistan.

By 1930, before the compelling exigencies of the Five Year Plan and the supreme strain of constructing a self-contained socialist economy, all considerations not contributing to the single aim of industrialization were relegated more and more into the background of Soviet policy.

In that year the Government of the U. S. S. R. undertook the concentration of all Eastern trade in the State Eastern Trading Company. It thus brought incontinently to an end the last remaining privileges of private trading which Persian and other Eastern merchants had enjoyed in Soviet Russia in one form or another as an exception to the application of the foreign trade monopoly.

In the same year the Russian Fairs were closed, where Persian and other Eastern merchants had found it possible to retain trading advantages offered by the competition of the market. Persian merchants now found themselves working under very unequal conditions in their Russian transactions. Henceforth both purchases and sales had to be made under a closed monopoly régime, without any of the advantages which traders have who operate under the laws of supply and demand in an open market.

For Persia the situation was all the more aggravated by the lack of means of communication which might have permitted an outlet for the products of its richest provinces, those bordering on the Caspian, elsewhere than to the Soviet Union. By the nature of the geographic and economic factors involved, however, the cotton and rice and other products of those provinces could have no other outlet.

So long as the U. S. S. R. had found it desirable to allow political considerations to influence the waiving of the strict application of the foreign trade monopoly to Persia and other Eastern countries, the realities of this situation had tended to be obscured.

Figuratively speaking, Persia was brought in 1930 to the realization that it occupied the same unfortunate position in respect to the Soviet Union as the man whose shoes pinch. The manufacturer had no thought of pinching the buyer's feet when he made the shoes, but if the purchaser has no other shoes the



pinching is inevitable. It was in the light of a quickened sense of the realities of this situation, induced by the withdrawal in 1930 of the remaining special privileges which the U. S. S. R. had previously accorded Eastern, including Persian, trade, that Persia was itself persuaded to impose a foreign trade monopoly régime the next year.

This Persian monopoly, however, hardly extended beyond the fixing of import quotas and the exercise of a general rather than of a specific control over foreign trade. Local merchants raised a demand that the government form a syndicate in which all Persian trade relations with the Soviet Union might be concentrated, the better to oppose the centralized strength exercised by the powerful Soviet foreign trade monopoly. This demand, although supported in 1932 and 1933 by a boycott of Soviet goods undertaken by private Persian merchants but having undoubtedly the tacit support of the government, proved abortive. The Government of the U. S. S. R. submitted the argument that the formation of a Persian syndicate having for its object trade with a specific country would be an act of discrimination, adding that no comparable objection, of course, could be raised to a syndicate having for its object trade with all countries.

Appreciating the force of this argument the Persian Government has proceeded to the gradual setting up of commercial companies, directly or indirectly controlled by the government through the National Bank, having a monopoly of the imports of specific products, such as sugar, matches, cotton piece goods, natural silk goods and so forth, and more lately of companies having concentrated in their hands the export of surplus Persian commodities, such as silk cocoons, dried fruits, cotton and so forth. While such a development, of course, has been in harmony with a world-wide movement looking to increased State control over national economy, the movement in Persia has been undoubtedly hastened by the powerful influence of the Soviet Union to which Persia is indissolubly bound economically.

When about 1926 direct Soviet political interest in Persia disappeared and those special trade advantages were withdrawn

which had been extended Persian and other Eastern trade in support of the Soviet's political aims, there ensued another well-defined period in the relations between the two countries. Increasing pressure was exercised upon Persian economy by Soviet industrialization. So there was increasingly compelling necessity for Persian economy, inextricably linked with the U. S. S. R., to adjust itself thereto. As has been said, the introduction of the Persian foreign trade monopoly in 1931 was one step to this end. But that having proved insufficient in the light of actual experience, there ensued the second important development in Persian economy, namely, the establishment of monopolies in specific Persian imports and the centralized control of trade in the principal surplus commodities of domestic production.

In the light of the fact that Persian trade has but a negligible importance for Soviet economy, while trade with the U. S. S. R. is of predominant importance to Persian economy, such an adjustment to Soviet exigencies was inevitable.

The year 1935 was marked by the conclusion between the two countries of an important commercial treaty and series of accords, by which, for the first time since 1926, Persia would appear to have succeeded in meeting the fundamentally new situation created by the great Soviet program of industrialization. Provisions were made for the concentration of practically eighty per cent. of the trade between the two countries in newly created commercial companies either directly or indirectly controlled by the Persian Government. Moreover, to balance the anticipated decline in the purchase by Persia from the Soviet Union of such commodities as cotton textiles, sugar and matches, for which Persia hopes in future to supply itself from its own industries, the U. S. S. R. undertook to furnish to Persia agricultural machinery and technical installations for the improvement of those raw products such as wool, cotton and rice which Russia takes in considerable quantities.

The treaty arrangements of 1935 between Persia and Russia thus mark a definite milestone in the relations between the two countries. The first period, from 1917 to 1926, was characterized

by special commercial concessions granted by the Soviet Union to Persia, in common with other Eastern countries, as a definite bid for political influence looking to the harassment of "imperialism's rear." The second period, 1926-1935, was marked by Russia's abandonment of direct political aims in Persia consequent upon its absorption in forging its new industrial economy. For Persia it was a most trying period in which one expedient after another was introduced in the endeavor to cushion the shock of the removal of the special privileges which its traders had enjoyed under the Soviet foreign trade monopoly law.

The treaty of 1935 would appear finally to have regularized economic relations between the two nations and to have afforded a solid basis for their development in the future. It indicates the increasing influence which Soviet economy is likely to have in shaping the content and the direction of Persian economy while sharing in its evolution. This is in all probability destined to be the characteristic of the third and most significant period in Perso-Soviet relations.

In 1930 Stalin had characterized Soviet policy as one of peace, adding that "we do not want a foot of foreign territory but we will not surrender a single inch of our own territory either." Those who were desirous of peace, he declared in 1934, would always receive the support of the Soviet Union, while those who might try to attack the Union, would receive a "stunning rebuff to teach them not to shove their hogs' snouts into our Soviet garden again." This nationalist note, the U. S. S. R.'s concern in these last years with vast internal problems, and its consequent preoccupation with the maintenance of world peace, should not, it is believed, be construed as portending any lessening of Soviet conviction that the forces set in motion by the principles of Leninism, such as have contributed to the regeneration of Turkey, Persia and Afghanistan, may not eventually have the convulsive repercussions in the East which Lenin envisaged. Only the time factor has changed, the leaven of world revolution being viewed now by the Bolsheviks as calculated to rise only after the lapse of years rather than of months.

Today the Soviet Government, instead of actively assisting the national-liberationist forces at work in Persia, Turkey, Afghanistan, India and China with direct counsel and material aid, as in the past, is content to confine itself to the observation of the historical forces at work in those countries. According to the Bolsheviks these forces are now in process of eradicating the elements of feudalism; and only after that historical task has been accomplished may the leaven of social revolution be expected to express itself in agrarian and social revolutions. The upbuilding of socialism in the Soviet Union, in the opinion of Soviet leaders, should hasten the development of this historical process. Moreover, as Radek has remarked, "revolutions are not carried in knapsacks," while Stalin has emphasized the Marxian principle that revolutions are made from within and not from without.

However much Soviet concern may have shifted in these latter years from emphasis on its Eastern policy, which from 1917 to 1926 represented its most active preparatory work in the program of world revolution, to one of increasing absorption in the fulfillment of the aims of "socialism in a single country," there can be no disputing the fact that the ferment promoted by that policy still continues to work powerfully in the East.

Vincent Sheean, after his visit to Persia in 1926, recorded the impression that nothing could be devised which will "ultimately check that advance of the Bolshevik power among the peoples of the East." He cited the factors of propinquity, natural wealth, fraternity of interest and feeling, intellectual consistency and force and, "above all, the emotional persuasiveness of a doctrine which tells the oppressed that they have an inalienable right to share in the common wealth of their countries."

The conflict in the Middle East between the opposing forces of socialism and the old imperialism is far from being, however, as imminently explosive as it appeared a few years ago. With the developments which have taken place since 1931 in the Far East and the rise of Nazi Germany since that time much has changed. The Soviet Union's apprehensions are no longer concerned with Great Britain but with Japan and Germany. Russia's Eastern



policy sprang from a defensive need to counter the offensive of the Allies against its Revolution in 1917. Now both Great Britain and the U. S. S. R. are united in the common aim of the preservation of world peace. Consequently, the Soviet Union no longer finds it advantageous to engage in the subversion of forces possessing a mutual interest with it in the furtherance of that aim.

Accordingly, both by reason of its internal and external policy Soviet influence in Persia and in those Eastern countries where British interests are affected appears all the more destined to take an exclusively economic rather than a political form. Ten, twenty years hence, should Soviet economic development pursue a consistent course, its pressure on Persia and the Middle East, however, will be irresistible. The impetus given to the growth of a form of State capitalism in Persia since 1931 under the economic pressure of the Soviet Union is some earnest of the proportions which Soviet economic developments are likely to exert on Persian economy in the future.

## CHAPTER XII

### THE MARCH OF MODERNISM IN PERSIA

#### *1. The Background Conditioning Shah Pahlevi's Reforms*

It is a commonplace to refer today to the awakening East, and more particularly the spectacular westernization of Turkey. But what of the Middle or Inner East, the East of Persia which, notwithstanding the invasions of Alexander the Great, of Genghis Khan, Tamerlane, Arabs, Afghans and Turks, has nevertheless preserved inviolate on the great Iranian plateau a culture peculiarly its own?

Of the national renaissance of Persia under Reza Shah Pahlevi since the war, the world has been generally made aware; of his successful efforts in ending the employment of Persia as a pawn in the diplomatic chess play of the Powers, and of his systematic eradication of the influence of the tribes which were the perpetuators of the strongest feudal influence—these are developments which have already been fully recited.

Less well known but equally significant of progress and of the westernization, or rather, the modernization of the country, are the successive and systematic measures inspired by the Shah with a view to breaking the power of the mullahs, or Moslem divines, whose reactionary influence has been, until the last few years, the greatest single force in staying the free development of modern thought and the introduction of modern ways.

Since the rise of Mohammed in the seventh century and the Arab invasion, one of the lasting results of which was the substitution of the Islamic for the ancient and indigenous religion of Zoroaster, Islam has made itself felt in every domain of Persian life.

Probably no other religion of the world has exercised such a

determining influence on every phase of human conduct and activity as Islam. Beside regulating marriage and divorce, prescribing forms of dress, such as the veiling of women, and imposing upon women complete isolation within the seclusion of their families, the Koran and Islamic sacred literature, such as the sayings of the Prophet, have constituted also the source of jurisprudence regulating criminal, commercial and civil legal procedure. All such procedure has been controlled by the so-called Shariat law and interpreted by judges deriving their authority not from the State but from the *ulema* or Moslem divines. So likewise with respect to education which, until recently, has been the exclusive domain of Moslem religious leaders.

It was this situation which conditioned the granting in Persia, as well as in other Islamic countries, of the so-called "capitulations." Thereby the nationals of Christian Powers were removed from the jurisdiction of the Moslem Shariat law and given recourse, in litigation affecting them, to courts presided over by their own consuls administering the laws of their respective countries.

Like all religions with the passage of time, Islam in Persia became stereotyped in form and content, as well as in interpretation and application. Rules of conduct which were suitable enough for the desert nomads of Arabia in the seventh century became an anachronism in modern Persia. Here the incongruity of applying precepts and of being guided in all relationships of life by rules of conduct formulated for a primitive society more than a thousand years ago was as great as if the Western world of electricity and corporate relationships had continued to be ruled by the Old Testament principles enunciated for wandering tribes of Israelites on the barren plateau of Judea, but little removed from Neolithic man.

However incongruous such a situation, it was, in fact, that with which, by and large, Reza Shah Pahlevi was confronted in his notable march forward toward the regeneration of the Persian people and the Persian State. But it is frequently overlooked that Reza Shah, in the application of his reforms striking the greatest

blows at the entrenched power of the Shi'a clergy since their hold on the country was validated in the sixteenth century by Shah Ismail, has been assisted by the movement of two great historical forces. These have been: (1) the disappearance, with the collapse of the Ottoman Empire and the development of a special degree of amity between the new Turkey and the new Persia, of the *raison d'être* of the Shi'a religion, originally imposed upon the country as a counterpoise to the threat of Ottoman aggression; and (2) the movement toward the westernization of ancient ways and the laicism of the State taken by the new Turkey, contiguous to Persia, encouraging the adaptation of Persia to the materialist civilization of the West.

If the Shah has had the good fortune to be assisted in his program of reform by two such powerful ideological forces, credit is no less due him for the supreme gift of the statesman in reading history aright. His natural genius appears to have endowed him with this gift to a supreme degree.

## 2. *Disintegration of Old Customs before the War*

Even before the Shah had appeared on the political stage many of the ancient ways of Iran were slowly being discarded under the impact of modern conditions. It will suffice if mention be made of only a few, such as the *koruk*, the *kalaat*, the *istikbal* and the *badrakah*, which had regulated manners from remotest times.

Until the years before the war the male population was rigorously prohibited from so much as glancing in the direction of the wives and concubines of the Shah, however heavily veiled they might be, when they appeared in their carriages in public. This prohibition, or *koruk*, as it was known, extended in the seventeenth century even to the males being forbidden, upon pain of death, to remain in the capital when the harem left the palace. Tavernier relates that Shah Sefi, upon discovering a peasant in the environs of Ispahan when he was out hunting with his wives, shot the peasant dead. On the other hand, Doctor Bell, the Scotch physician who visited Ispahan in 1717 with a Russian mission,



recounts an instance when, under similar circumstances, Shah Abbas the Great displayed an unexpected clemency and even revealed himself akin to the Caliph Haroun-al-Raschid. Coming unexpectedly upon a country fellow on the occasion of a *koruk*, the monarch, taking a fancy to the "simplicity and innocence of the peasant," from whom he had requested an explanation of his presence, ordered the ladies of his harem to unveil and directed him to choose from among them a wife. Bell says the peasant later became a great favorite at Court, thus fulfilling the *Arabian Nights'* character of the great Shah.

As late as 1880 it is recorded by Doctor Wills that whenever he chanced, in driving about Teheran, to meet the Shah and his wives, there was always a great hullabaloo from the royal attendants for all men present to be off or to turn their faces to the wall. That is all now a thing of the past.

The custom of the *kalaat* or the bestowal of robes or rich presents by the King as a mark of favor is as ancient as the Old Testament. In Esther VI, 7-9, it is recorded that "For the man whom the King delighteth to honor," let the royal apparel be brought which the King useth to wear." This practice on the part of the Achæmenian kings, to which Esther bears testimony, survived until the time of Reza Shah Pahlevi. *Kalaats* were regularly made by the Shahs to those whom they wished to favor. Occasionally they would resort to the bestowal of an unusually ragged robe upon a high official as a sign of disgrace; an instance is related by Chardin. Today the practice of *kalaats* has entirely ceased.

The ceremonies of the *istikbal* and the *badrakah* are probably as old as Oriental civilization. The one is the ceremonious sending out of a deputation to greet the arrival of a dignitary; the other, the dispatch of a similar group to accompany the departing traveler. Both were proportioned, in the character of the deputation and in the distance to which it was commissioned to proceed, by the relative distinction of the guest whom it was intended to honor. So important was the *istikbal* ceremony considered by the foreign powers that Russia, in an annex to the Treaty of Turk-

manchai of 1828, insisted upon the incorporation of provisions for the sending out of an *istikbal* from each station along the route which a Russian Ambassador might travel from the frontier to Teheran, and for the inclusion of the respective governors along the route in each *istikbal*. Until 1862 every newly arrived chief of a diplomatic mission was met outside Teheran not only by a Persian deputation but by the members of the diplomatic corps. In that year, according to Eastwick, the practice was discontinued by the diplomatic corps; but until a few years ago it was maintained by the Persians; with the advent of the automobile it has now entirely ceased, as has also the complementary ceremony of the *badrakah*.

### 3. *First Test of Strength between Shah Pahlevi and the Mullahs*

In 1923 Reza Khan became Prime Minister. In the same year, Mustapha Kemal proclaimed a Turkish Republic. Powerfully influenced by the progress which the resurgent nationalist movement was making in Turkey, and affected by Turkey's struggle toward an ideological as well as a political emancipation, Reza Khan considered the establishment of a republic in Persia.

He would appear to have planned to proclaim a republic with himself as president on the Persian New Year, March 21, 1924. A day or two after the assembly of the Majlis, a meeting of most of the ex-prime ministers and cabinet ministers approved the enactment by the parliament of a resolution authorizing the Prime Minister to take such a step.

On March 3, 1924, however, the Turkish Parliament took the revolutionary action of abolishing the Ottoman Caliphate and of disestablishing the Islamic faith in Turkey. Although Turkey represented the Sunni sect of Islam, and Persia, the Shi'a—a difference which, as has been shown, is somewhat comparable to the division separating the Roman and Greek Catholic Churches—the Persian *ulema* took immediate fright. Apprehending that a Persian republic might similarly deprive them of their vested rights, they summoned all the forces at their command in a cam-

paign of agitation against a republic. This agitation, reinforced by mob pressure on the Majlis, was successful in staying action.

Reza Khan, not yet sufficiently sure of his strength, and displaying that extraordinary pliancy and political astuteness which contributed so much to his ascent to power, showed himself amenable to the storm aroused. Having visited the holy city of Kum near Teheran to consult with the high dignitaries of the Shi'a faith assembled there, he returned to Teheran and, on April 1, 1924, issued a proclamation declaring that the establishment of a republic was contrary to the Islamic religion.

The reactionary mullahs, who had for so many years cast their blighting influence over the country, had seemingly triumphed over the rising star of Persian nationalism and spiritual emancipation as personified in Reza Khan.

The triumph, however, proved but temporary in the light of subsequent events. If the year 1924 represented the apogee of the power of the Moslem *ulema*, the tide of their influence has been receding ever since. It is, indeed, not a rash statement that since 1924 their power and influence have been broken and shattered beyond repair.

#### 4. *The Shah Adopts a Policy of Attrition*

In 1925 Reza Khan became invested with the headship of the Persian State and early in 1926 was crowned Shah. He quickly profited from his experience in 1924. His first measures in the direction of breaking the clergy's back were taken prudently and with that unerring perspicacity which has distinguished his public career.

In 1925 a modern Commercial Code was adopted, and the clergy thereby deprived of jurisdiction in commercial litigation. So obviously needed a reform was introduced without undue clerical opposition,—and this notwithstanding the fact that in 1918 the effort to adopt a Civil Code modeled after the Code Napoléon had been abandoned as "sacrilegious," while in 1922, as a result of riots instigated by the clergy, the government had been com-

pelled to abandon its intention of establishing a modern Commercial Code at that time. In January, 1926, a new Penal Code was also successfully introduced, thereby putting an end to the century-old procedure of the exaction of blood money, and of an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth, in penal matters, a relic of the conceptions of primitive man reaffirmed and sanctioned by Mohammed.

The first open struggle with the clergy came in 1927 over the introduction of a compulsory military service law. They were apprehensive about the growing power of the secular State, and they were particularly aroused against this law because it exempted students of theology only after they had passed examinations before an official board.

As a protest a number of leading Moslem divines, after instigating the closing of the bazaars in certain sections of the country, took refuge in the holy city of Kum. From there they addressed an appeal to the Majlis. Having regard for their still supposed strength and influence, as evidenced by the effectiveness of the boycott instituted by the bazaars, Reza Shah deputed the Prime Minister and the Minister of the Court to proceed to Kum to compose the dispute. In this the government was successful, as a result of vague assurances offered the clergy.

It was the last time, however, that the government would even undertake to compound its differences with the mullahs or afford them even such recognition of power as might be implied in negotiations. Thenceforth, opposition of the clergy toward reforms undertaken by the new régime was not permitted expression or, if sporadically expressed, it was extinguished by the most forcible measures.

##### *5. An Open Offensive against the Mullahs*

Reza Shah Pahlevi soon had occasion to measure the mullahs' strength and at the same time was given a dramatic opportunity to evidence to Persia in the most striking manner that his power was greater than that of the reactionary clergy.



Early in 1928 the Queen, his consort, mother of the Crown Prince, visited Kum, a shrine particularly sacred to Moslem women as the burial place of Fatima, in order to participate in the Persian New Year services at the mosque. Having inadvertently exposed her face during the service, she was severely admonished by the officiating mullah, who proceeded to denounce the tendencies of modern Persian women to depart from the traditional customs of the Islamic faith. As a result, the fanatical crowd was aroused to make a demonstration against the Queen.

Upon being acquainted with the occurrence the Shah immediately ordered two armored cars and a body of troops to Kum, and he himself followed them there the next day. Arriving at the mosque he entered its portals without removing his boots, in accordance with customary Islamic procedure, and having found the offending mullah he proceeded to administer to him corporal punishment. He further humiliated the clergy of Kum by giving orders for the arrest of three criminals who had taken sanctuary within the precincts of the mosque, in spite of the age-old claim of the immunity from justice of refugees who found asylum there.

This action arose immediately out of the personal affront to the Queen. But undoubtedly the Shah seized the occasion for striking most effectively at the prestige of the clergy. From that time on, throughout 1928, one reform after another, touching the vested interests and the prejudices of the mullahs, was introduced with scant regard for their susceptibilities and with no active opposition from them.

Consequent upon the abolition of the capitulations on May 11, 1928, the Majlis nine days later authorized the government to enforce nine hundred and fifty-five Articles of the new Civil Code providing a uniform basis for the application of the Koranic law. This eliminated individual interpretations by the mullahs.

In the late summer of the same year the government issued police regulations which went far toward the liberation of women from the most stringent restrictions that Islam had imposed through the centuries. They were now admitted to cinemas, res-

taurants and other public places. They were granted the right to speak to men in the streets and to ride with men in carriages (with the hood down). And, more important than all, police protection was authorized for those Moslem women who might choose to appear unveiled in public.

A little later the government proceeded to arrest the leading Moslem cleric, Modarres, who had proved a thorn in its side in the Majlis and was continuing an underground agitation against it. Modarres was spirited off to a remote provincial town where he has remained in exile ever since.

The way was now prepared for an even more radical reform encroaching upon Moslem prejudices, namely the promulgation, on December 28, 1928, of a law on uniform dress for men. This law, which was to be effective in cities as of March 21, 1929, and elsewhere not later than March 21, 1930, banned the traditional male headgear, the *kolah*, which had been worn at least from the time of Cyrus, and provided a compulsory substitute in the form of the Pahlevi hat, with a brim. Moreover, in place of the flowing robes worn generally by Persians, European coat, vest and trousers were prescribed.

This law struck particularly at the Moslem custom of remaining covered during prayers, which the brimless *kolah* made possible by permitting the forehead to touch the ground in the required obeisances. Moreover, by exempting from the application of the law only recognized Moslem dignitaries, the law provided for the government's control over those licensed to wear the turban, traditional mark of the Moslem cleric.

One of the Persians most prominent in official life at the time was frank in his description of the objects which the government sought by the law. "We propose," he said, "to drive the clergy into the open, to eliminate those who have been masquerading as holy men, and otherwise to foster national unity by eliminating a variety of special clothing which heretofore has served to identify an individual as being a resident of Tabriz or Meshed rather than a Persian." It was added that once this sense of national solidarity had been inculcated by the prescribed dress, full liberty

would be accorded the individual in the choice of modern head-gear. The government's intentions in this respect were to be fulfilled sooner than was realized then.

The law on uniform dress, while arousing sporadic opposition from the clergy, was successfully introduced, the morale of the mullahs and *mujtahids* having been by this time thoroughly broken. As if to accentuate their impotence there was enacted also in December, 1928, legislation, supplementing that previously enacted in February, 1928, which created a land and property registration bureau in the Ministry of Justice. This bureau alone was endowed with competence in matters affecting the verification of property titles, previously the sole prerogative of the Moslem clergy.

Almost immediately thereafter the judicial power of the Moslem clerics was still further restricted, and striking evidence given of the relative impotence to which they had been reduced. New legislation defined the sole judicial functions left to the mullahs, in the religious courts. By the law of January 3, 1929, the competence of the religious courts was restricted to matters of marriage and divorce, attestation to oaths, wills and so forth, and, in general, to matters of personal status. It was furthermore provided that the clerical judges were to be paid by the Persian Government and so made amenable to the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Justice.

At the same time, the government undertook, following the exile of Modarres, to seize secretly, and spirit off to exile or to prison, influential mullahs who might be suspected of fostering agitation against its policy of reform and aim of reducing the influence of the clergy.

#### 6. *A Breathing Spell in the Reform Movement*

The loss of his throne by Amanullah, King of Afghanistan, in 1929, was due in part to the opposition aroused among the Afghan Moslem clergy by the hasty introduction of reforms. The experience of that neighboring sovereign was not lost upon Reza Shah Pahlevi.

Standing between the westernized influences making themselves felt in Sunni Turkey and the deep fanaticism of the Afghan tribes, far removed from modern habits of thought, Reza Shah Pahlevi gave thereafter every appearance, by his policy, of appreciating the necessity for Persia to proceed prudently along the path of reform.

After the frontal attacks upon the prerogatives and prejudices of the Shi'a clergy in 1928, the Shah suspended for a year or two the institution of any striking reforms or measures touching the roots of clerical influence.

The breathing spell was used to consolidate the reforms already instituted by accustoming the population to the revolutionary changes. Step by step the courts of the judicial reform were extending their authority. And this extension of the secular power of the State, proceeding on a variety of fronts, was slowly strangling the influence of the mullahs.

The undermining of the power of the clergy, which accompanied the application of the various reforms, was accentuated in 1931 by a further active assault in the form of a marriage and divorce law.

Introduced in the Majlis on July 26, 1931, despite the clamor of the mullahs, the law was approved on August 14 and entered into effect on September 14, 1931, with the acceptance of only a few amendments to the original measure in deference to religious susceptibilities.

In the judicial reforms previously introduced, marriage and divorce had been one of the few spheres left to the Moslem religious courts. The new law of 1931, however, went so far as to invade this province of clerical prerogatives by requiring that all marriage contracts and acts of divorce be registered with a civil official.

Under the Shariat law of the Koran recognizing the age of puberty of women as nine and that of men as fifteen, Persia, in common with other Moslem countries, had long suffered the practice of child marriages. These were now effectively estopped. It was prescribed that a marriage might be contracted only by



persons possessing a physical aptitude for it, and legal sanctions were provided against those infringing the law. For the first time women were permitted to institute divorce proceedings against their husbands. By fixing the husband's responsibility toward his wife, by providing for the custody of minor children, and by establishing broader safeguards for her property rights, the law went far in affording a Moslem woman a measure of rights which for centuries had been denied her.

Meanwhile a direct blow at the fanaticism of the clergy, delivered within their own proper precincts, was given in the orders issued by the government to permit foreigners to visit the mosques of Ispahan. Previously, the Shi'a mosques in Persia had been as scrupulously closed to the presence of the infidel as Mecca itself. The choice of Ispahan in this respect was particularly significant in that the clergy and Moslem population of that city were notoriously fanatical. For years Ispahan had constituted, with the encroachment of Russian influence in north Persia and British influence in the south, one of the few thoroughly Persian centers of population least susceptible to foreign influence. In fact, until a few years ago no foreigners were permitted to remain overnight within the city's precincts, and the leading mullah of the town wielded an authority and influence to which the civil governor found it prudent to defer. The decision of the government to open the mosques in Ispahan to Christian visitors was, consequently, the most direct kind of challenge to the prestige and to the prejudices of the clergy.

To reinforce the order of the government it was provided that foreigners desirous of visiting the Ispahan mosques should be afforded the protection of the police. While it has not yet been deemed prudent by the government to permit foreign visitors to enter these or other mosques without police protection, their admittance with it is now allowed to practically all the mosques throughout the country, with the exception of particularly sacred shrines, such as those of Meshed and Kum.

Further, in 1928 the government took the first steps toward doing away with the terrible exhibitions of public flagellation

accompanying the celebration of Ashura, the tenth day of Moharrem, in commemoration of the martyrdom of the Imam Hussein. The infliction of head wounds with swords and knives was the first form of self-mutilation disallowed by the government. This was followed a year or two later by the prohibition of any form of it in public. In 1935 the government was so secure of its position that it went to the length of prohibiting the appearance, in the streets anywhere, of the mourning processions which for so many years have distinguished the anniversary of Hussein's tragic death.

Likewise there have been abandoned by slow degrees, at the government's initiative, the dramatic representations, or *taziyehs*, of Hussein's martyrdom which were given throughout Persia during the first ten days of Moharrem. Until as late as 1928 the Moslem diplomatic chiefs of mission in Teheran, the Afghan and Turkish Ambassadors and the Egyptian Minister, were officially invited to the plays in Teheran. They were always attended by the Shah and his ministers. After 1928 the practice of inviting Moslem chiefs of mission to the plays was discontinued, the Shah himself ceased to honor them with his exalted presence and, in the end, they have ceased even to be given.

So also in 1935 there was forbidden in Teheran the observance of the Feast of the Sacrifice or Id-i-Kourban, a custom than which there was probably none older in ancient Persia, and one common to the entire Moslem world. Although it had come to be observed as a Moslem ceremony commemorating the last day of the annual pilgrimage to Mecca, it dates indubitably from the most remote antiquity.

On the day in question in Teheran a male camel was publicly sacrificed on the great main square in the presence of the Shah. The master of ceremonies was a chosen King-of-the-Day. Carrying a military lance and arrayed in most regal robes, he headed the procession into the square on a white stallion. He was followed by a detachment of palace guards, mounted attendants and native musicians. Then came the gaily caparisoned camel destined for sacrifice. The rear was brought up by the head of the local

butchers' guild. Arrived at the appointed spot, the camel was unrobed, made to kneel, and bound. The temporary king then stabbed the camel with his lance, the chief of the butchers severed the animal's throat to the accompaniment of cries of "Bismillah" from the crowd, the camel was cut up and the pieces were distributed to those present.

The custom of appointing a temporary king to conduct the sacrificial ceremony is alone sufficient to identify the feast as one of the highest antiquity. One need only refer to the many examples of such a custom noted by Sir James Frazer in *The Golden Bough* as prevalent among primitive peoples in many parts of the world, and even surviving in isolated regions of England and of Europe within modern times, to warrant the conclusion that the Iranian practice must have gone back to the remote past.

The sacrifice of an animal, as an act propitiatory of the gods, was one of the most widespread customs of primitive peoples. Moreover, that the custom, as it persisted in the Near East, has not been confined to those of the Moslem faith, is attested by the annual sacrifice of sheep at night on a mountain height overlooking Nablus in Palestine by the few surviving Samaritans.

### 7. *Recent Accentuation of Reforms*

The years 1934 and 1935 were marked by an accentuation of the progress of the Shah's reforms, as well as by the habituation of the country to the innovations previously introduced, and by the rapidly declining power and prestige of the reactionary clergy.

The enactment in September, 1934, of a law making the age of eighteen years the age of majority passed virtually unnoticed in Persia. Yet it superseded the Koranic recognition of this age as that automatically acquired by evidence of ability to spend money judiciously.

At about the same time approval was given by the government to the introduction in the curriculum of the Medical College in Teheran, for the first time in the history of Persia, of a course in

anatomy permitting human dissection, to be given by an American physician attached to the American Mission Hospital in Teheran. The course, begun in 1934, has since been pursued with no sign of overt disapproval on the part of the more fanatical members of the community.

In 1935 the reform movement proceeded apace with the introduction by the government of the metric system of weights and measures, the promulgation of a new marriage law further broadening the basis of that of 1931, the simplification of Moslem funeral ceremonies, the abolition of titles, and, most far-reaching reform of all, the introduction of Western headgear for men and the expression of the wish of the Shah that women should gradually abandon the veil.

Though the law of 1931 had made marriages conditional on "physical aptitude," it had left indefinite the legal minimum marriage age. The Government had thus sought to avoid giving too violent offence to the mullahs who invoked the authority of the Koran. But the ages of puberty named there—nine years for women, fifteen for men—while corresponding with physical development in Arabia, do not conform to conditions of life in Persia. The government therefore had issued unpublished instructions to the clerical notaries allowed to perform Moslem marriages by the law of 1931 not to execute marriage contracts for women under sixteen. The marriage law of 1935, however, in definitely prescribing the minimum legal age for women as fifteen and for men as eighteen, came out into the open with an overt disregard of Koran prescriptions. The instance affords a striking example of the changed conditions from 1931 to 1935. Before, the power of the clergy had been such as to influence the government, when modifying the law, to take into account the Koran; in 1935 the Koranic provisions relating to marriage were ignored.

In the case of funeral ceremonies, the Shi'a practice, in contradistinction to the Sunnite, has always been of a most informal character, including the offering of tea, coffee, cigarettes and pipes incident to the service in the mosques. The ceremony was often unduly prolonged over a number of days. By a decision of



the Council of Ministers in June, 1935, it was in future forbidden for tea and coffee to be served in mosques at such services or for smoking to be indulged in. Participants also were enjoined not to seat themselves on the ground but to use chairs, never hitherto permitted in Persian mosques. And the services were to be limited to one day.

There followed two months later the abolition of all titles in a country where they have been the prerogatives of Kings and Ministers and notables alike since the days of Cyrus. The only titles reserved were those for the Shah and his family. Henceforth the Shah is to be referred to only as His Imperial Majesty and not in the exalted phrases formerly indispensable to a description of the sovereign. In Persian treaties with other countries, for example, the Shah was generally described as "elevated like the planet Saturn, the Sovereign to whom the Sun serves as a standard, whose splendor and magnificence are comparable to those of the heavens, the sublime Sovereign, the Monarch whose armies are as numerous as the stars, whose grandeur recalls that of Jamshid, whose magnificence equals that of Darius."

Nor was the application of such a parade of titular words confined to the Shah. Every Persian of any consequence thought it lacking in dignity to be without titles embodying half a dozen or more sonorous phrases. A characteristic incident of the absurd lengths to which the use of titles was carried in old Persia was cited by a Teheran newspaper on the occasion of their abolition in 1935:

A third-rate aristocrat was traveling in winter with one of his servants. Late on a bitterly cold night they managed to reach a caravanserai. The servant knocked at the door. "Who is it?" asked the drowsy innkeeper. "The slaves of His Most Respected, Most Exalted and Most Glorious Highness so and so-ed-Doleh, may His greatness continue to increase!" replied the obsequious flatterer. "Go thy way, may God forgive thy father, for I have no room to lodge so many passengers," declared the illiterate innkeeper.

Henceforth the only titles permitted in Persia will be those for the royal family such as are everywhere the common prerogatives of royalty, the use of "excellency" for high officials, of "aga," or mister, for men, and "khanom" (madam) for women. Even such harmless appellations as "mi'za" and "khan," the former signifying one who is literate and the latter being roughly equivalent to mister, have been suppressed. So also have the honorific religious titles of Hajji, Kerbelai and Meshedi, formerly given to Moslems who had made the pilgrimages to Mecca, Kerbela and Meshed. Slowly, one by one, the pages of the *Arabian Nights* are being closed in Persia, and the pages of modern progress substituted for them.

Most significant of all the reforms introduced in 1934 and 1935, however, have been those dealing with the national dress and the further emancipation of women. The Shah took the utmost care to prepare the people for them by slow degrees.

The 1929 law, while substituting European for Persian designed clothing for men, had reserved as a distinctive headgear for Persians the so-called Pahlevi hat. By the year 1935 the Shah had convinced himself that Persia was ripe to take the last and final step in the westernization of costume by replacing the Pahlevi hat with the European form of headgear and by gradually abolishing the veil for women.

The opening of the tenth session of the Majlis on June 6, 1935, was chosen as the occasion for the final assimilation of the dress of Persian men with that of the West. On his customary annual appearance in person before the Persian legislative assembly on that day, the Shah removed his military cap on entering the building, for the first time in modern Persian history. So likewise did the assembled legislators, who, in accordance with a prior intimation, had provided themselves with Western headgear. The significance of this revolutionary step may only be appreciated when it is understood that, from the most ancient times, in Persia and in the East generally, as with orthodox Jews everywhere, the covering of the head at all times, whether within or without doors, has been rigorously observed, the uncovering being deemed a mark

of the most signal disrespect. Notable also on the same occasion was the absence from the rostrum, from which the Shah delivered his usual speech, not only of the Imam Suna', the principal *mujtahid* who had always hitherto stood on his right, but of all other Moslem dignitaries. Their absence was expressive of the Shah's complete indifference to their influence, and of their impotence in all civil matters.

The action of the Shah and of his ministers and deputies in appearing at the Majlis in Western headgear and in uncovering their heads was, of course, a signal for all Persia to follow suit. For a few weeks, only government officials were compelled to confine themselves to the use of European hats; but on July 8, 1935, an official modification of the 1929 law on uniform dress was promulgated substituting the "international" hat for the Pahlevi hat. The police were given orders to enforce the law and within an incredibly short time, considering the extent of Persian territory and the remoteness of many of its villages, the Pahlevi hat had completely disappeared.

#### 8 *Emancipation of Persian Women*

The movement looking to the emancipation of women has taken a slower and more subdued course. It has had to take account of the most deep-seated prejudices of a people who for centuries almost completely excluded women from any contact with men other than members of their immediate families. The *chador*, or loose garment which entirely envelopes the Persian Moslem woman from head to foot when she emerges from her home, much like the robe of a member of the Ku Klux Klan, has for these centuries protected her from the eyes of others. Incidentally, it offers an unrivaled opportunity for intrigues with men such as Western women have enjoyed only on the occasion of masked balls. Persian homes have always been particularly designed for the separation of the sexes, the *biroun*, occupied by the men, being completely cut off from the *anderoun*, or women's quarter.

Numbers of the wives of Persians in Teheran who had resided

abroad availed themselves of the opportunity granted by the police regulations of 1928 to abandon the *chador* in favor of European dress. By 1935 it was estimated that of a total population in the capital of three hundred thousand, some four thousand Persian women were appearing unveiled in public. An example was given also by the two young daughters of the Shah who, although not frequenting public assemblies, appeared in their motorcars and on horses unveiled in public thoroughfares.

Moreover, the Queen when visiting Europe in 1934, went unveiled and even undertook to receive in Berlin an official of the German Foreign Office who presented her with a bouquet of flowers as a mark of respect. Before she did so, however, it was deemed necessary, in recognition of the traditional seclusion of Persian women, to consult the Persian authorities in Berlin. They, in turn, referred the matter to Teheran, where the Shah himself made the affirmative decision.

With the opening of the new school year in the autumn of 1934, the government let it be known that it approved of the attendance at classes of unveiled women teachers. This policy was only preliminary to the issuance of formal orders forbidding either teachers or pupils to attend government schools with veils. Further, co-education has entered Persian life almost unremarked. That same autumn girls were accepted by the Medical and Law Schools in Teheran. The new university, which is in course of construction, will be open alike to men and women. While it is not the policy of the government to introduce such sweeping measures of reform as those undertaken in Turkey by Mustapha Kemal where the use of the veil to women generally was forbidden by a single government decree, the same ends will be attained in Persia gradually with one encroachment after another upon ancient customs and habits of life.

Thus, in May, 1935, a woman's cultural center was opened in Teheran under the patronage of one of the Shah's daughters. The same month witnessed a parade of schoolgirls in athletic costumes, including bloomers. These developments were followed, on June 28, 1935, by a tea offered by the Prime Minister at the Iran



Club at which, for the first time in the history of Persia, members of the Cabinet and other high officials were invited with their wives. The tea was given with the Shah's sanction for the purpose of placing the official stamp of approval on the appearance of women unveiled in public.

There was general expectation in Teheran that these innovations would be followed by some decisive action for the abandonment of the *chador*. If any such specific measure was entertained it was given up for the moment as a result of the serious rioting which occurred in the great shrine of Ali Reza at Meshed in the second week of July, 1935. A certain Sheikh Bahloul had incited fanatical protest against the introduction of Western headgear. Troops were brought into the shrine, and the mob, which had assembled there under the haranguing of the Sheikh, was finally put down by rifle and machine-gun fire and order re-established. For a day or two the incident threatened to assume serious proportions, but the bold and effective manner of its suppression, irrespective of the sacred character of the Meshed shrine, under cover of which the fanatical movement had sought to protect itself, proved once again that in the Shah, the Moslem clergy of Persia had found an opponent worthy of the task which they had challenged him to perform.

It would involve a complete misunderstanding of the Shah's resolute character to conjecture that even in the face of such a disturbance he could be deflected from his great program of reform. It is safe to conclude that nothing short of his death will move him from a course he has instituted with so much discretion and yet bold resolution.

There will be, it is safe to say, no sudden abolition of the *chador* by legislative decree. The emancipation of women, and the emancipation of the Persian people generally, from ancient superstitions, and their adaptation to new and more modern ways of life may be expected to pursue the same gradual development as it has in the past, with the minimum of shock to the prejudices of the population.

Without the spectacular innovations which have distinguished

the progress of westernization in Turkey, Persia has been proceeding during these years, almost unnoticed by the rest of the world, on the way to a like radical overhauling of its ancient ways. If the progress has been slower, it has been no less marked, considering the fixed habits and the ultra-fanaticism which have characterized the Persian people these many centuries, isolated as they have been, on the Iranian plateau, from the currents of European thought which have surged more directly upon Turkey.

In the construction of new roads and the uprooting of the remnants of feudalism represented by the tribes, the Shah has made major contributions to the building of a strong Persian State. His greatest monument may well prove to be the emancipation of his people from the dead and stultifying influence of the past.

As I read the last pages of the proofs of this book in the spring of 1936 news comes from Persia of a widespread movement, fostered by the Shah, toward the removal of the veil. It is reported also that the adoption of the Latin in substitution of the Arabic alphabet in Persia is an imminent development.

Thus continues uninterruptedly from month to month the progress of Persia toward the adaptation of this ancient Aryan land to the modern ways of the West. The East and the West are meeting at long last in a region of the world from which the people of the West originated some millenniums ago.

The wave of westernization beats now upon the East both from the Pacific as well as from the interior of Central Asia. Diverse cultures as old as history are being modified and adapted to the mechanistic civilization of the West. The East has given mankind religion; the West discharges its debt with the revelation of scientific concepts of life.

THE END

## DYNASTIES AND RULERS OF PERSIA





## DYNASTIES AND RULERS OF PERSIA

### *Achæmenian Dynasty, 559-331 B. C.*

Cyrus the Great,	559-528 B. C.	Xerxes II,	425-424 B. C.
Cambyses,	528-521 B. C.	Darius II,	424-404 B. C.
Darius the Great,	521-485 B. C.	Artaxerxes II,	404-359 B. C.
Xerxes I,	485-465 B. C.	Artaxerxes III,	359-338 B. C.
Artaxerxes I,	465-425 B. C.	Arses,	338-336 B. C.
		Darius III,	336-331 B. C.

### *Alexander the Great, 331-323 B. C.*

*Seleucids or Successors of Alexander, 323 B. C.-129 A. D.*

*Arsacid Dynasty of the Parthians, 248 B. C.-226 A. D.*

### *Sassanian Dynasty, 224-641 A. D.\**

Ardeshir I,	224-241	Bahram V,	420-438
Shapur I,	241-272	Yezdigird II,	438-457
Bahram II,	276-293	Chosroes I,	531-579
Shapur II,	310-379	Chosroes II,	590-628
Yezdigird I,*	399-420	Yezdigird III,	632-641

### *The Omayyad and Abbasid Caliphates, 661-1258 A. D.*

In the closing years of the Abbasid Caliphate, power in Persia became diffused and fell into the hands of various local dynasties, of whom the most important were the Samanids, 874-999, Buwayhids, 932-1055, the Ghaznavids, 962-1186 and the Khwarizmshahs, 1077-1220.

### *Seljuks, 1037-1300*

Togrul Beg,	1037-1063	Malik Shah,	1072-1092, etc.
Alp Arslan,	1063-1072		

### *Mongol Il-Khans, 1258-1336*

Hulagu,	1258-1265	Gaykhatu,	1291-1295
Abaga,	1265-1281	Baydu,	1295-1295
Ahmad,	1281-1284	Ghazan,	1295-1304
Arghun,	1284-1291	Uljaitu Khodabenh,	1304-1316, etc.

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\*Only the most important rulers have been included.

*Minor Dynasties*

After the Mongol invasion there was again a dispersion of political power. The principal local dynasties who succeeded the Mongol collapse were the Jalâyirs, 1336-1411, Sarbadars, 1337-1381, the Muzaffarids, 1313-1393, and the Karts, 1245-1389.

*Timurids, 1369-1500*

Timur or Tamerlane, 1369-1404    Shah Rukh,    1404-1447, etc.

*Black Sheep Dynasty, 1378-1469**White Sheep Dynasty, 1378-1502**Sefavid Dynasty, 1502-1736*

Ismail the Great,	1502-1524	Sefi,	1629-1642
Tahmasp,	1524-1576	Abbas II,	1642-1667
Ismail II,	1576-1578	Suleiman,	1667-1694
Mohammed Khodabendeh,		Hussein,	1694-1722
	1578-1587	Tahmasp II,	1722-1731
Abbas the Great,	1587-1629	Abbas III,	1731-1736

*Nadir<sup>6</sup> Shah, 1736-1747**Zand Dynasty, 1750-1794**Kajar Dynasty, 1794-1925*

Aga Mohammed Khan,		Nasî-ed-Din,	1848-1896
	1794-1797	Muzaffar-ed-Din,	1896-1907
Fath Ali,	1797-1834	Mohammed Aly,	1907-1909
Mohammed,	1834-1848	Sultan Ahmed,	1909-1925

*Pahlevi Dynasty, 1925-*

Reza Shah Pahlevi, 1925-

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